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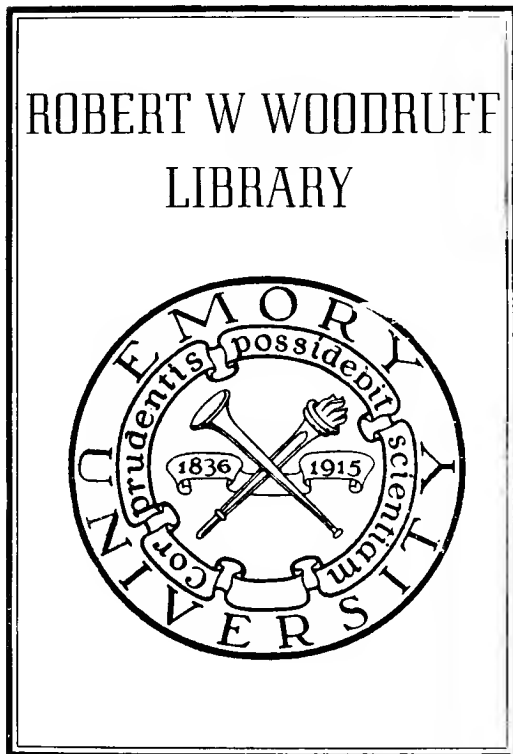
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A PRINCE OF THE BLOOD.

BY

JAMES PAYN,

AUTHOR OF

"LOST SIR MASSINGBERD," "THE HEIR OF THE AGES,"

"BY PROXY," ETC.

FOURTH EDITION.

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A PRINCE OF THE BLOOD.

Prologue.

AT THE 'INVENTORIES.'

It was a very hot night at the Inventions, which was the reason, or one of the reasons, which made Mr. Arthur Forester and Miss Cicely Forester prefer sitting in the balcony of the Chinese department to walking about the grounds. Their chairs were very close together, and they were evidently on such intimate and familiar terms with one another, that if one had been informed that they bore the same name it was easy for even a bad hand at guessing to infer that they were brother and sister. It is casier, however, to guess than to guess right; and as a matter of fact they were first cousins.

There is something, to my mind, very pleasant in that relationship between two young persons of opposite sexes, since, in addition to its present advantages, it offers possibilities which nearer relationship does not admit of, and which, when one of the two parties, as in Miss Cicely's case, is twenty-one years of age and exceedingly pretty, are apt to occur to the other, and, perhaps, even to both.

To occur to one—the mere mental operation—is, indeed, as has been said of guessing, very easy; a great many occurrences of the same nature have probably happened to most of us, whereas to occur, in the sense of realization and

actual fact, is not so common. There were several obstacles to the suggestion in question being carried out in the present case; to begin with—which rendered it unnecessary to dwell upon the rest—the young people had not a penny between them. This phrase, of course, is not to be taken literally. They must, in fact, have had sixty pence—for it was Wednesday and a half-crown night—to enable them to be at the Inventions, or, as some have lightly termed it, “The Flasheries,” at all; while they had had to pay an additional twelve pence apiece for their seats in the balcony. The very cigar which Mr. Arthur was smoking had certainly cost something—though I am not prepared to say it had been paid for by the consumer—more than a penny. The coin, indeed, has such a relative sense that some Algies and Adelas are said to have “not a penny between them” when they have ten thousand pounds. We call them “as poor as Job,” but their case only resembles that patriarch’s before the final catastrophe fell upon him, and when he still retained a little something, such as his camels. But Arthur and Cicely (or Sissy, as he called her, perhaps to keep up the delusion that he only loved her in a brotherly way) had really nothing that could be called their own at all, except a few debts. Their parents had moderately good incomes, which died with them, and large families, which did not. It was necessary, therefore, that the girls should be provided for, with more or less well-to-do husbands, and that the boys should provide for themselves. There was no more thought of fortune-hunting in the former case than of greed in the latter; and they all thoroughly understood their positions.

It is the fashion to accuse young women of heartlessness who in love affairs manifest any common-sense; yet I am inclined to think that the love which is really genuine, or, at all events, that is worth much, has always a substratum of that kind. There are young ladies who are ready enough to marry him they please to call “the man

of their choice," though they know he has only sufficient to maintain them during the honeymoon. I do not blame them—I am much too polite for that, I hope; but I pity them, and I also pity *him*.

Sissy Forester was as affectionate and tender-hearted a girl as ever said "Yes" to a lover, but she was not a fool. In this respect she had the advantage of Mr. Arthur. The young man, indeed, was clever enough; if he did not get on at his profession—the Bar—it was only for want of practice. He had a ready wit; he would have been even diligent had there appeared the remotest chance of the blossom of his legal learning turning into fruit; but to sit in lonely chambers, poring over law books, without the shadow of a client crossing one's threshold, is weary work. What makes it so sad is, that there is no means of informing the priesthood of Themis that you are thus sacrificing yourself upon her altar. So far as they are concerned you might just as well be enjoying yourself. If one could only put a board up over one's chambers, "To Solicitors and Others," stating how long one had been at it, and for how many hours a day, it might attract some passing "solor's" attention, and so bring business; but the etiquette of the profession forbids this. Arthur's chambers, with half a clerk, cost his father a hundred a year, and he lived at home.

With these prospects he would have married Cicely Forester to-morrow, but having an uneasy suspicion that she was a very sensible girl, as well as a very charming one, he had never ventured to ask her to become his wife. There would have been no excuse, of course, for such an act of lunacy; but there would have been a mitigation, for if he did not ask her himself, and pretty soon, he knew that somebody else would do so. It was not only the well-founded apprehension that so adorable a creature would find others to worship at her shrine that troubled him, but the existence of an actual suitor. This was a Mr. Dunlow,

a friend of Sissy's father, a man not, indeed, in his first youth, but whose years could not be called disproportionate to her own; a worthy fellow of good means, who had not yet indeed proposed to her, but concerning whom it was well understood that she "had only to hold up her little finger" to bring him to her feet. She had, as Arthur believed, no feeling warmer than regard for the gentleman at present; but the pale flame, *Regard*, is soon fanned by circumstances into something stronger and brighter; and all the circumstances were in his favour. Before Arthur's jealous eyes was present everywhere the somewhat plump form of Mr. Robert Dunlow. He saw him now in the wavering band of the electric light, and in the dancing fountain, just as Sissy's mental vision would have seen him (though under a very different aspect) had she been really in love with him. Even while the young fellow was speaking to the girl, his thoughts would often stray to his rival, and render bitter the very cup of pleasure which was at his lips. It was this, perhaps, as well as the fact that he dared not speak of what he would, that made Arthur Forester more silent in his cousin's company than elsewhere.

"How like life itself all this is, Sissy," he murmured, after one of many pauses. "The music and the colour and the splendour last such a little time, and then everything appears more dark and blank by contrast."

"Not to those who prefer Nature to Art," was the quiet reply. "To my mind the moon yonder is preferable, at all events for a permanency, to all these garish lights, nor is a brass band absolutely necessary to my existence."

"You are very hard on me," he murmured gently, striving in vain to meet her eyes, which were fixed on the fairy scene before her.

"What have I said that is hard? Is it because I have spoken the truth?"

"Now you are still harder. You mean to imply that I shrink from looking facts in the face?"

"I congratulate you on your promptness in drawing an inference."

"Thank you," he answered bitterly; "it is pleasant, because so rare, to hear you admit that I can do anything."

"I have never doubted your abilities, Arthur," she replied with tender gravity; she knew that she was hurting his feelings, and suffered more than he did himself from the keenness of her own words—she used them as the surgeon uses his knife, unwillingly, yet for the patient's good.

"What is the use of abilities when there is no scope for them?" was his impatient rejoinder, which lost, however, some of its vehemence from the fact of its being delivered under his breath. "Heaven knows I have read hard enough and perseveringly enough too; you don't know what it is to ask for work and be denied it."

"Whom have you asked?" she inquired, in a tone in which curiosity was not so distinctly marked as a certain quiet irony.

"Asked? Well, one can't go touting for briefs like a commercial traveller," he answered angrily; "there is only one way, they tell me, by which a man can get on now at the Bar who has no connection."

"What is that?"

"He must marry an attorney's daughter! You would not advise me to do that, I suppose?"

The last words were uttered in a very low and gentle tone, and he cast a plaintive glance at her as he awaited her reply, which did not come immediately.

"If I were in your place I would do anything, *anything*, rather than live a life of idleness."

"But how can I help being idle?"

There was no answer save a little shrug of the shoulders, but it was full of significance.

"You despise me, Sissy?"

"I despise all idle young men."

Her voice was steady, but her face was deadly pale, and the hand which rested on the rail in front of her trembled in its little glove.

The young man flushed to his forehead, half rose from his seat, and then sat down again. There was a crowd of people all around them, and he could scarcely leave her there alone; they had no suspicion, of course, of what was passing in his mind; they thought he had only risen to draw the coffee-cup which was on the table nearer to him; but his soul was consumed with anger, and shame, and love. It was a balcony scene of a very different kind from the one in 'Romeo and Juliet.'

"To taunt me with idleness, Sissy, when it is no fault of mine," he muttered between his teeth, "is most cruel and unkind."

"Cruel if you will," she answered huskily (turning on him a reproachful glance which seemed to say, "Cruel, indeed, it is, but not to you alone"); "cruel if you will, but not unkind, nay, 'cruel only to be kind.'"

There was a long pause. The fairy fountain rose and fell, and blushed and paled, and rose and fell again; the myriad lights twinkled from the trees and from the sward, and from the stream beneath them; the music grew and failed, and died and rose and died again, but of none of these things did this unhappy pair take note, but communed with their own sad hearts in silence.

"What would you have me do?" at last he murmured hoarsely.

"Your duty. Is it fitting, is it manly, that you should ask a girl for counsel in such a matter?"

"Since you were so free with your blame, I thought perhaps you might have some advice to give me," he answered reproachfully.

"As to the blame, I beg pardon, I had no right to blame you."

"Do not say that, dear Sissy, do not say that," he

murmured pleadingly. "Whatever you tell me to do, I will do it."

"That is to say, you would shift your responsibilities to my shoulders," was the indignant reply. "You are not a child, Arthur; you surely know what is right and what is wrong without being told."

"But it is not a question of right only. Listen to me, pray listen to me, Sissy," for she had moved her head impatiently, "I have had an appointment offered me in India, a very small thing, but still something. Do you know of it?"

"Yes, I know of it."

"And yet you have never spoken of it to me?"

"Nor you to me."

"Oh, but that is so different. If I accept this appointment, which may or may not lead to something better—something worth having—it cannot come for years."

"Does something worth having, a competence I suppose you call it, generally come to young gentlemen of twenty-eight? Or do you think your merits demand the special intervention of Providence in your favour?"

"But if I took this post should I not lose you, Sissy?"

"I was not aware that you had ever won me."

"That is true; I have never dared to ask you to be my wife. How could I, being penniless?"

"How indeed?"

"Yet I love you with all my heart and soul. I would give my life to make you happy. To be with you, except for the thought of parting from you, is Heaven itself; but that thought is always intruding. I am like one in a blissful dream, who is nevertheless conscious that he is dreaming, and will sooner or later awaken to misery. Even at my worst—when I am most despondent—I worship you."

'The desire of the moth for the star,
Of the night for the morrow;
The devotion of something afar
From the sphere of my sorrow'

then fills all my being; at my best—but that is only dreaming.”

The girl kept her face averted from her lover, but she did not interrupt him; once she had striven to do so, but her tongue had refused to do its office; the temptation of listening to those passionate words, it might be for the last time, had been too strong for her. She had suffered herself for the moment, despite prudence and a fixed resolve to the contrary, to be carried away by it. She was greatly agitated. The rose in her bosom shook and lost its petals; they dropped upon her lap, and one would have fluttered to the ground, but her companion caught it unobserved. Her eyes were wet with tears.

“Sissy, dear,” went on the young man in a changed voice, “I have done with protestations; if you do not believe that I love you truly, it is useless for me to say any more. Only if you ask me why it is I have not gone to India, it is because I felt that in so doing I should be leaving you to another.”

She shook her head decisively.

“What?” His face lit up with a brightness no electric flame could rival. “Will you promise that in my absence you will not marry Mr. Dunlow?”

“I shall never marry Mr. Dunlow.”

“Thank Heaven for that.” It was pretty to see how, since the girl had said it, he took her word as though the thing were an accomplished fact. “And is it possible,” he went on breathlessly, “that for all that time—one knows not how long it may be—you will wait for me?”

It was not because Cicely had not made up her mind upon the matter that she hesitated to reply. She was very much in love with Arthur, but by no means prepared to cast all prudence to the winds; if once a promise passed her lips, it became a law of her being, which made her less hasty than some young women can afford to be in saying “Yes.” Moreover, though she admired and respected

Arthur (for, indeed, she could not otherwise have loved him), she had no great confidence in the stability of his character. Under the conditions of life to which he had been accustomed there was no fault to find with him. He was a wholesome-minded, generous, affectionate young fellow. But to hard work, discomfort, and self-dependence he had been unaccustomed; nor, though he had met with ill-success, had he known what it was to suffer from it materially.

That he had said nothing beyond the truth when speaking of his devotion to her, she was well convinced; but she thought it possible, nay, probable, that the thought of winning her would not be able to support him under circumstances such as he was only too likely to meet with in the new life which had been proposed to him. What if, after a year or two, he should return to England, a failure, as poor as ever, with even less hope of getting on in his profession than at present, and yet bound to marry a penniless girl. She was thinking of him far more than of herself; but she thought of herself too—of the wreck that would thus be made of both their lives. If he succeeded, in however small a way, she would be well content; and however long a time he took about it, she was willing to wait for him. She knew herself to be true as steel. But with that alternative of wretchedness for both of them before her eyes, she was resolute not to say "Yes." On the other hand, how should she persuade him to take the only course that offered for his good without giving him the assurance of her fidelity.

"You have not answered my question, Sissy," resumed the young man importunately. "I have told you how I love you; you have only to say one little word, and from that moment I have something to live for, something to hope for, something to work for. I know it is very selfish of me to ask you to say it, to ask you to wait for years—perhaps for many years—for an absent man, while

your beauty fades (if, indeed, it can ever fade) and your youth departs."

"It is not *that*," she put in quickly.

"Can it be, then, that you doubt me? Oh, Sissy, I will be faithful to you as long as I live. I promise you before heaven——"

Again she interrupted him with earnest vehemence. "I do *not* doubt you, Arthur, but I will not accept your promise. I wish you to be free. That must be our bargain, if bargain there is to be between us. We must both be free."

"That is impossible, seeing one of us is already bound," he answered, bitterly. "I, at least, am yours. I have sworn it."

"Such a contract can hardly be binding," she went on, with a forced smile, "without the consent of both parties."

"Then you, on your part, refuse to reciprocate my trust?"

"I did not say that. But I will make no promise. We must both be free."

It was no wonder that he did not understand her. We are not so unconscious of our own weaknesses as it is the fashion to assert, but we are often ignorant of how they strike other people. He was quite willing to undergo any inconveniences (and much more than inconveniences) for any time, for his love's sake, but he disliked the idea of going to India for other reasons than that he had given her, though that, it was true, was the chief reason. Arthur Forester was a product (and not a discreditable one) of culture and high civilization, and he did not relish exile. Better and higher natures than his own have not shrunk from it, nor have thought of such an exodus as exile at all, but from going to India without the promise of his beloved assured to him he did shrink. And yet he was not angry with Sissy because she had not given him her promise; it was very difficult for him to be angry with her

under any circumstances, and her assurance that she did not intend to marry Mr. Dunlow had made him very grateful to her. He was also certain, it must be remembered, though she had not said so in so many words, that she loved him.

They sat in silence for many moments; presently Sissy exclaimed softly, "There is godmamma." She drew back a little, not wishing to be recognized, and pointed over the balcony to an old lady going by on the path below in an armchair. Arthur's eyes listlessly followed the direction of her finger.

"Is she not beautiful? Is she not magnificent?" asked Sissy with enthusiasm.

"She looks like a princess," assented the young man.

"Do you think so? Now, if you knew all, that is very curious."

"Indeed! Is she really then a princess?"

"Among all the thousands that are in these gardens," said Sissy, ignoring this inquiry, which indeed was put half in jest, and still following the slow moving figure with her eyes, "there is none whose history has been such a romance as hers; moreover she is the best of women; her whole life, which I fear is fast coming to a close, is passed in doing good."

"Quite a fairy godmother, in short," he answered lightly. "Why have you never told me about her? What is her story?"

At this simple question which followed so naturally upon the conversation which had preceded it, a change passed over the girl's face. It brightened up, not exactly with pleasure, but with the satisfaction that is derived from the sense of a difficulty smoothed away.

"Yes; you shall know her story. That is," she continued gravely, "if she will give me permission to reveal it, for it is known only to a very few."

"Why not tell it me yourself? If it is a long one, so

much the better. We will come here every evening, and you shall go on with it—this is the very place for it—like Scheherazade in the ‘Arabian Nights.’”

“No. It is no tale to be listened to lightly,” she answered with gravity; “you must read it with care and lay it to heart. It contains the only answer I can give you, Arthur, to the question you put to me a few minutes ago.”

“Are you serious? You may be sure that not a syllable will escape my attention; but how shall I recognize your dear self in the story of another? I am not very good at a moral lesson,” he added deprecatingly, “especially if it takes the form of allegory.”

“There is no allegory in godmamma’s story; the lesson it teaches is simple enough, and applies as much to me as to you.”

He looked amazed and puzzled, as well he might.

“You must find the key of it for yourself. See, the fountain has leaped its last; we must be going home.”

“Ah, if my home was but your home. Sissy dear, will you not promise?”

“No; I will not promise,” she answered firmly. “For both our sakes, Arthur, we must be free.”

The very next morning, for Miss Cicely was prompt in all she did, there arrived a MS. at Mr. Arthur Forester’s chambers, in the Temple. He received it, if not with the same rapture, with as much excitement as though it had been a brief; it was a lengthy document, but occupied only a small space, being written in a neat but almost microscopic hand. Scrupulously clean, it bore tokens of much use, for it had had one constant reader; the same fingers had wrinkled it, the same eyes had pored over it and watered it with their tears, again and again. On the flap of the envelope were written in Cicely’s hand these words, which might have been taken for a motto, but which her lover recognized as a personal monition.

“I sympathize with her regrets.”

CHAPTER I.

A DISUNITED FAMILY.

ON June the 13th, 1835, four persons were breakfasting together in a private room at the 'George Hotel,' Portsmouth. They were a family party consisting of a gentleman and three ladies. The former, Mr. Ernest Norbury, was a person of some note in the city, and of peculiar importance in the eyes of the East India Company, which was in the last days of its greatness. He had held more than one high post in India, and was now, somewhat to the astonishment of his friends, who had assumed him to have shaken the pagoda tree with sufficient skill upon previous occasions to render further application to it unnecessary, about to fill another. He was about sixty years of age, short, but squarely built, with a strong, intelligent face. His complexion, naturally pale, had not been rendered swarthy by the tropic sun to which it had been exposed, and though his life had been by no means devoid of action, he was of corpulent habit, which added to the effect produced by a pompous and dictatorial manner.

Miss Sophia, his sister and junior by five years, resembled him in figure, though she was much stouter, but in no other respects. Her face was flat and florid ; she smiled whenever there was an excuse for smiling. Her enemies—if she had any, which she had not—might have said that this was to show her teeth, which were very white and even ; but this was not the case : she smiled from pure good nature, and also sometimes to mitigate wrath. Her manner was hesitating, especially when addressing the head of the family ; the expression of her countenance was weak and undecisive, though by no means displeasing. It was whispered, but not widely believed, that she had once been very good-looking. The other two members of the

party belonged to another generation. The elder of the two, Miss Eleanor, Mr. Norbury's daughter, was twenty-four years of age; she was tall and slight and slim, and her complexion was pasty, but, like her father's (though she, too, had been to India), it had not been baked by the sun. Her eyes were of pale blue, and her manner for her age and sex exceedingly undemonstrative. She was of a reserved nature and spoke little, but when she did it was to the point; she was one of those conscientious people who do not allow even their silence to be misunderstood.

Miss Edith, Mr. Norbury's niece, was five years younger than her cousin, and, therefore, two years short of being of age. Though she was going to India, like her aunt, for the first time, she was darker than her uncle and cousin, who had lived there. Her complexion was naturally very delicate, but not having had a mother to look after it (for she had been left an orphan at a very early age), it had been somewhat bronzed by our summer suns—a circumstance, however, which did not prevent her being exceedingly comely. Her eyes were grey, intermixed with hazel; and her hair, which was very luxuriant, was of a deep brown. She had a fine colour and a very charming figure. Her dress was far simpler than that of her cousin, but very becoming. Nobody, however (of the male sex), could have thought of her dress while looking at Edith Norbury, and if he did so, it would only have been to make the general but private observation, "That girl would look well in anything."

The expression of her changeful face was, nevertheless, just now by no means joyous; she had a depressed air which struck one as incongruous and unsuitable in her. This depression was not unobserved by the others, but except for an occasional squeeze of her hand from Aunt Sophia when opportunity offered itself for this expression of sympathy, it was ignored. Mr. Norbury was reading his newspaper to himself and the rest were silent. The

viands were plentiful, but it was an uncomfortable and unsociable meal.

"The *Ganges* starts to-morrow morning at daybreak," presently observed Mr. Norbury, in loud, authoritative tones, like those of a crier giving public notice. "As everything has been satisfactorily arranged for us, there will be no need for us to go on board till the evening, in the cool."

The last words were suggested by his tropical experience. It is natural to the Anglo-Indian to do everything with reference to the temperature; but, as a matter of fact, it was warm enough even at Portsmouth.

The High-street, on which the windows of the 'George' looked down, was baking hot: the soldiers that passed in their stiff stocks and close-fitting uniforms excited the pity of the civilians, as the sailor with his loose and low-necked garb aroused their envy. The trees on the ramparts at the end of the street moved not a leaf. The flags on the dwellings of the great military and naval authorities clung to their staffs as though they were themselves in "office;" even the smaller bunting on the ships in harbour, caught sight of here and there through gaps in the houses or over their roofs, had not a flutter in them. Distant firing broke on the ear complainingly, as though it were too hot for drill.

"It is really too warm to do anything," remarked Aunt Sophia, fanning her ample self with a local guide-book.

"I am going shopping," said Miss Eleanor.

This was not merely a reproof to laziness, though the tone conveyed that moral lesson. It had a much more direct significance; it implied that she must have a companion.

"Would it not be better to wait till it gets a little cooler, my dear?" remarked Aunt Sophia.

"No doubt; only, unfortunately, it is a law of nature that the higher the sun rises the warmer it gets. As for me, I am not made of sugar."

To judge by the tone in which she spoke, she certainly was not.

"Well, it is quite impossible that you can walk out alone, my dear, in a place like this—so military and naval," sighed Aunt Sophia. She cast an appealing glance at Edith; but that young lady, who had already finished her meal, which had been a very scanty one, and was sitting pensively at an open window, made no sign. It was probable she had not even heard the conversation. Miss Eleanor curled her lip, which was by nature straight and very thin.

"Come," she said, impatiently, "let us be off."

The two ladies retired, and presently reappeared with their bonnets on. Mr. Norbury was still behind his paper, his niece still at the window.

"You are not coming with us, Edie, I suppose?" said Aunt Sophia cheerfully. The girl shook her head. "Well, I must say it is rather warm for walking," as if in apology for the other's dumb refusal.

"What nonsense!" ejaculated Miss Eleanor. "If you think this warm, what will you think of India?"

"I shall be dug out," said Aunt Sophia prophetically. It was a phrase she always used to express her feelings in a heated atmosphere; but she used it now with quite pathetic despair. She looked forward to a residence in the gorgeous East with the utmost horror. "My dear," she had once said to Edith in confidence, "I would rather live in Whitechapel all my days than go to India. I shall melt away there to nothing, and you will have to remove the last of me with brown paper and a hot iron." She was serious, though she spoke in jest. "Circumstances over which she had no control," in the personage of her brother Ernest, were impelling her; and in Edith's case she spoke to sympathetic ears. Eleanor, on the other hand, ridiculed her apprehensions. She could hardly be said to make fun of them, for she had not in her nature the materials for

fun, nor did she make light of them. On the contrary, her humour was to exaggerate to her aunt the disagreeables of life in India. She discoursed upon the thug and the tiger with affected familiarity, and raised the temperature to imaginary degrees. As somebody said of her who knew her well, Eleanor Norbury had the grimness of a schoolboy without his light heart.

Some minutes elapsed after the ladies had departed, which were passed by the occupants of the apartment in complete silence. Edith, with her chin resting on her little hand, and her elbow on the window ledge, sat deep in thought and apparently unconscious of her companion's presence; not so, however, Mr. Norbury. He sat facing her with the newspaper still before him, but ever and anon, over the edge of it, he shot a furtive glance at his niece, which seemed to give him anything but satisfaction. At last he rose, and in a bland and studiously conciliatory voice, observed, "Is your outfit complete? Edith, is there anything, any comfort or luxury, which my forethought has not provided? There is plenty of time to rectify any such omission, and if Portsmouth contains the article or articles in question, I will make it my business to procure them for you."

"Thank you, uncle; no, I have everything I require." How feeble are words, as a vehicle of expression, compared with the voice that speaks them, or with the manner in which they are delivered. Though the girl's reply was a strictly accurate one, her meaning seemed somehow the very reverse of that which her speech conveyed. Mr. Norbury looked at her steadily, as after a momentary glance towards him, she had resumed her former position, and with a heavy frown and a smile that fitted it—took up his hat. "An obstinate wench," he murmured to himself as he went down-stairs. "To have withstood such an offer as that, which, as she knew, must have comprehended a new bonnet at least, and might even have run to jewellery,

shows in a woman quite an unparalleled amount of pig-headedness.—Tush! she's in the sulks, that's what she's in. Well, well, like Madeira she'll be better for going round the Cape. A sea voyage and a couple of years in India will wean her from her folly. Absence makes the heart grow fonder, they say. In that case, Mr. Charles Layton, she will adore you, for I shall take care she never sees your face again."

CHAPTER II.

ON THE RAMPARTS.

As soon as Edith Norbury found herself alone, she uttered a deep sigh of relief. The temperature without and within was hotter than ever, but the oppression which had weighed upon her almost to suffocation was withdrawn. For the first time since she had left her room that morning she felt free to look and move as she pleased. "The breath of man," science tells us, "is deadly to his fellow-creatures;" but hardly less so, under certain circumstances, is his presence. In the same room with her Uncle Ernest, Edith Norbury experienced much the same sensations as some very intelligent and bright-eyed bird who finds himself in the same compartment with a snake. Let him be ever so fascinating in his manner, he would end, she was convinced, by destroying her. His flattering speeches, his offers of costly gifts, were only so many acts of lubrication, intended to make the swallowing her the easier. If asked for an explanation of her apprehension, she would have found it difficult to give one. It was not Ernest Norbury's nature to be demonstratively kind to any one, but to Edith he had been always both generous and gracious. He had put himself out of the way, in fact, to be agreeable to her, nor was it his fault so much as his misfortune that the effort had been very perceptible. As a host—and she

had lived in his house for the three years which had elapsed since her father's death had left her orphaned—she had had nothing to complain of him. His table was liberal; his carriage had been as much at her own service as at that of his daughter, or of his sister, who resided with him. As a kinsman, he not only made no difference between those ladies and herself, but made much more 'fuss' with her than with either of them; his enemies said because she was an heiress, but that seemed hardly probable, since he was a man of means himself, and had, therefore, not the weighty reason for that worship of wealth in another which bows down most heads so low. In no domestic relation to her it was certain could Uncle Ernest be considered as an ogre. He was also, however, her guardian, and had absolutely and decisively forbidden her to marry the man of her choice.

For one of her age and sex Edith Norbury had a strong sense of justice, and she sometimes asked herself was it fair, for this one action, cruel and unreasonable though it was of him, that she should ignore all her uncle's previous good conduct towards her, and impute to him she scarce knew what, of evil, but something which filled her involuntarily—nay, against her will—with a vague loathing and terror? With Mr. Charles Layton, barrister-at-law, she was without doubt very much in love. Before she met him her later life, notwithstanding she was still so young, had been as a dull, monotonous sea, while ever since it had been lit with smiles and sunshine; and now that his presence was forbidden it had not only become dull again, but gray and cold, without the least gleam of light in the horizon. Uncle Ernest, doubtless, did not quite believe that matters were so bad as this with her, but she had done her best to convince him of it. She had assured him with all the eloquence of nature's pleading, that the happiness of her life depended on her engagement, and he had been deaf to her tears and prayers. He had given, of

course, his reasons, or rather his reason, for his cruel conduct, and that had seemed to her a wholly inadequate one.

Mr. Layton, he said, was a needy man, whereas she was an heiress. He was making, however, a gradually increasing income at the law, and was certainly both diligent and clever, and he had some expectations, though of an uncertain kind. Under these circumstances it had been infamous of Uncle Ernest to call him an adventurer, yet that was the term which, in a long and painful interview with his niece, he had applied to her lover. Perhaps this plain speaking, even more than her uncle's bare refusal of her petition, was at the bottom of her changed feelings towards him. The man who could call Charles Layton an adventurer seemed to her capable of saying, yes, and doing, anything. Stung by indignation and despair, she had told Uncle Ernest that if his only objection to her marriage with her lover was in truth disparity of fortune, he, her guardian, might take her money for himself, and then Charley would take her penniless and prove that he was no adventurer.

This reasonable proposition, so far from finding favour in Uncle Ernest's eyes, made him what could only be described as furious. He had not only looked and spoken as she had never thought it possible he could look and speak, but had somehow left behind him the impression that he had shown her his true face, with the mask off, for the first time. From that hour all confidence in Uncle Ernest was gone, and even the grounds on which her confidence in him had hitherto rested were gone with it. She did not forget, of course, his hospitality, nor the solicitude he had so long exhibited for her welfare; but they no longer seemed to have been dictated by duty. It was impossible, if he loved his dead brother as he had professed to do, that he could have behaved as he had done to that dead brother's child. That Edith's father had nevertheless believed that he had loved him was certain; he had not only

left his whole fortune in trust to him for her benefit, but her future until she should come of age entirely in his hands. He had the absolute disposal of her as regarded her place of residence ; and this right he was pushing to the uttermost by taking her with him to India.

The reason of so much power being confided in him was, unhappily, the very reason which Uncle Ernest gave for his thus exporting her. Her father had been afraid that his daughter's fortune would attract adventurers ; and had, therefore, armed her guardian with every weapon to defend her against them. He would have made her a ward in Chancery, but that he believed in his brother's judgment more than in that of the law ; nor, finally, had he been content with even these measures of precaution. Like one who keeps fast his prisoner with bolt and bar, and also puts him on his honour, her father had besought her to look on her uncle as a second parent, and even obtained a promise from her as he lay dying, that she would comport herself in all things to his brother Ernest's will ; and this was the bond that formed her firmest fetter. The Rev. John Norbury, Rector of Midstead and Canon of Downminster, had never been suspected of being a saint, but neither was he a man of the world, in any sense. As the elder son of a wealthy father he had been always prosperous, quite independent of his Church preferment. His money had come to him not only without effort, but without even the full knowledge of how it came. Business would have been distasteful to him, no doubt, had he had any experience of it ; but he had none. His younger brother, on the other hand, had shown great capacity for it, and the Canon had admired him accordingly, as we are apt to admire our own flesh and blood who distinguish themselves in matters out of our line. It was upon the whole no wonder that the Canon, in leaving this life, had confided his daughter and her affairs so absolutely to his brother's care. Filial love prevented her from resenting this fact, however much she

regretted it, and she felt that, however mistaken he had been, he had done his best for her. But she did resent her uncle's conduct above measure, and while bowing to his authority for the sake of him who had delegated it, she felt that he had grossly abused it.

To take her to India with him, not, as she was well convinced, because it was necessary or because he could not have safely bestowed her at home, but merely to separate her effectually from the man she loved, was an outrage.

Such was Edith Norbury's position as regarded her Uncle Ernest—a state of things so grievous and intolerable that it made all other matters almost indifferent to her. Her relations with her cousin Eleanor were by no means what she would have wished them to be; but they had suffered no change, as in her uncle's case, from good to ill. They had always been more or less uncomfortable—what diplomatists call 'strained.' The cause of this was not very explicable to her. She was loth to accuse her cousin of jealousy, but she had certainly seemed to dislike the consideration with which her uncle had treated her. Eleanor would fain at first have given herself the airs of an elder sister, and when her efforts in that direction were put down by her parent with a strong hand, their failure seemed to embitter her against her. Of late, she had by no means insisted upon this superiority of age, but had resented the attentions paid to Edith by their common friends, not hesitating to hint that they were the result of her wealth rather than her merit.

But where Edith felt her conduct the most keenly was with regard to Mr. Layton, of whom she knew Eleanor entertained a far better opinion than her father, and yet had taken the latter's part in the controversy concerning the young man. At one time, unconscious of the pleasure her praise had given Edith, she had praised him to her exceedingly; but since he had declared his love for her cousin, she had set herself against him. When reminded

of her approval of him, she did not deny it ; and even confessed that it was his very desire to ally himself with Edith that set her against him. "He has no self-respect," she said ; "no man with proper pride, being in comparatively narrow circumstances, would aspire to the hand of one so wealthy as yourself, even if he really loved you." The poisonous sting in the tail of that speech was too much for Edith ; she could not trust herself to reply to it, and from the moment it was uttered, she felt that all which constitutes true friendship between her and her cousin was dead, if, indeed, it ever had an existence. Even Aunt Sophia, slow as she was to speak up, or out, about anything, when she heard those cruel words, had cried, "For shame, Eleanor !" but her niece had only added, "I was asked my opinion, and I have given it."

And it was with this girl for her companion, and with Ernest Norbury as her host and master, that Edith was about to embark for India, for a residence of at least two years. Was ever heiress in so sad a plight? Most girls went to India in search of a suitor—the motive, perhaps, which caused her cousin Eleanor to regard their exodus with such complacency—but she was about to be carried thither avowedly to escape from one. What pressure, it was only too probable, would be put upon her in the mean time! What efforts would be made to detach her from her lover ; what risks lay even in the chapter of accidents extending over so long a period ; and at the best, how unhappy among such domestic surroundings must be her sojourn in a foreign land.

Portsmouth, or rather its next-door neighbour, Southsea, was not unknown to Edith Norbury. It was not far from Midstead, and had been a favourite resort of the Canon's in the summer months. As a child she had played under those very trees upon the grassy rampart which she now beheld from the hotel window. It had been her custom, or her nurse's custom, to see the evening gun fired from

the neighbouring bastion. The fancy seized her to re-visit these spots once more. That Uncle Ernest would not approve of it was certain. He disliked her going anywhere unaccompanied by Eleanor or Aunt Sophia ; but her apprehension of incurring his displeasure was not just now very keen—it is even doubtful whether it did not give her some zest for the enterprise.

She put on her bonnet and started at once, for there was no knowing when her guardian might return. As for Eleanor she had gone shopping, and for her last day's shopping ; and, notwithstanding the heat of the weather, her absence might be counted upon up to luncheon time at least. On the ramparts it was by comparison cool, but not a soul had sought their shade but herself. I have been told by competent authorities that Portsmouth is the best defended town, independent of natural position, in Europe ; but at the date of our story the Portsdown lines did not exist, save perhaps in the brain of some engineer, importuning, and importuning in vain, an incredulous War Office. The old ramparts only, with their deep fosses, were there ; the drawbridges, the moats, the sluices, the subterranean footways, cunningly devised to interpose by serpentine windings the massive earth to the progress of the cannon-ball. All these things were familiar to Edith. The sentries pacing here and there in the distance, the soldiers at drill on the Common, or guarding with flashing bayonets the drab-clothed convicts at their spade-work—all looked as it had looked to her in the old days. She thought she could discern the very house in the old-fashioned Jubilee Terrace where they used to lodge. As nature knows no change, whatever happens to us mortals, so it seemed that human affairs here went on like clock-work, no matter who lived or died. How often, with her father's hand tight clasped in hers, had she listened to the same dropping fire of musketry that now met her ear ; how often gazed at those truculent offenders in drab, half in

pity, half in fear. The Canon had known all the authorities ; she had sat with him in the Governor's pew in the garrison chapel, amid a blue and scarlet congregation, the movements of the service accompanied, to her delight and awe, with jingling of spurs and rattling of scabbards. She had played with the sword-knots of old generals, and with the cocked hats of admirals of the red, white, and blue. Often had her father taken her up the harbour in some ten-oared galley, lent to him by the high officials in the dock-yard, to visit the *Victory*, where Nelson died, or the biscuit manufactory which supplied the navy, but had always one to spare, a very hot and hard one, for her dainty teeth ; or Porchester Castle, where the French prisoners were confined in the great war.

She seemed to hear once more the measured beat of the oars, and the shrill notes of command of the little midshipmen who accompanied them. Yet how long ago it seemed, nevertheless, now dear papa was dead. In those days she had thought it a dreadful thing to die, but now it almost seemed to her a more dreadful thing to live. To dwell in exile far from home, and separated from the only being she loved, was indeed a cruel fate. Walking very slowly, and musing in this sad fashion as she walked, she came presently to her old friend, the evening gun, now free from its little ring of spectators. One individual only was standing near it—a bearded gentleman, apparently an invalid, for, in spite of the heat, he wore a cloak. He had climbed the parapet, and was gazing through a spy-glass out on Spithead, where the *Ganges*, as her uncle had informed her (indeed, it was the only vessel there), was lying at anchor. She gazed at it, too, through the embrasure with sorrowful eyes and a sinking heart. That, then, was to be her floating prison for three months, after which she was to be a captive and an exile for nearly two years more on shore, hundreds of miles from Charley. She was so buried in these sad reflections that she did not notice that

the stranger had slid off the parapet and approached her. He was a young man, very good-looking, and, if an invalid, showed no traces of it in his face. His hair was brown and curling, his gray eyes were large and soft, but with plenty of intelligence in them; he had no whiskers or moustache, which, perhaps, caused his beard to misbecome him—it somehow looked as if it ought to belong to an older man.

“If you are trying to make out the *Ganges* he said, in low, respectful tones, “perhaps you would like to use my glass.” At the sound of his voice Edith turned round and started—nay, trembled in every limb. Her nerves, ordinarily strong enough, had been sorely tried of late, and her thoughts, fixed upon one object, took unconsciously a colour from it, which affected all around her. She felt it was but fancy, yet there was something in the stranger’s tone that reminded her of one who was no stranger, and which made her whole soul vibrate. Unable to acknowledge his courtesy even by a word, she gazed at him with intense amazement. As if understanding the cause of her perplexity, he smiled a reassuring smile. “The hair,” he said, “is the hair of Esau, but the voice is the voice of Jacob,” and with his left hand he gave a tug at his beard, and off it came. The girl uttered a cry of delight. “Oh, Charley, Charley! is it Charley?”

“I think it is; it seems so, doesn’t it?” he answered, with a tender smile, as he clasped her in his arms. “I thought I would just come and say good-bye.”

CHAPTER III.

‘FAREWELL.’

“You darling! you darling! Let me go, Charley; the sentinel has his eye upon us.”

“Quite right; his business is to see that we are not

interrupted. His orders are to shoot all who have not the password 'Faithful and True.'"

"Oh, Charley, suppose my uncle should come by," she murmured timorously.

"Then the sentry has orders to fire low. No, my darling; your uncle has gone to the dockyard. I have just met him with his business face on. He believes I am still in Derbyshire."

"How good of you to come so far, just for one last word from my lips, and"—here she smiled in the slyest and most bewitching manner conceivable—"and, the other thing."

"I would have gone round the world for it," he murmured simply.

"But how did you know you would meet me here?"

"I did not know; I only hoped. You told me that you used to love the old ramparts, so I guessed that you would revisit them if you could, and alone. Fortune, you see, has at last begun to favour us. Perhaps she will do more."

"Oh no, oh no!" moaned the poor girl bitterly; "she is against us. Even in sending you here—do not think me ungrateful, Charley—but even in that she is not kind. All that terrible farewell has now to come over again. I don't think I can bear it, Charley; my heart will break." Her pretty face, looking up into his with hopeless yearning, looked piteous and pathetic indeed. "Oh, Charley, to part, to part, and not to meet again for two long years. In that time you will have forgotten your poor Edie."

He smiled and shook his head incredulously, but it was evidently an effort to him to smile. The spectacle of her despair was terrible to him.

"Of course, there is a short way out of all this, Edie," he said gravely, "and it is selfish of me not to take it. I could take you away with me to my sister's house, and before a month was over could call you my lawful wife. I need not say how happy, beyond all dreams of happiness, that would make me, and yet, as I have said, it is selfish-

ness that prevents me. You are not of age, and, though I am well convinced you know your own mind upon the matter, others will not think so. It will be said that I took advantage of your youth and inexperience to get your money when you come of age. Your uncle will say, 'Did I not always tell you he was an adventurer?' and the world will believe him. In two years' time I hope to be in a better position as to means. There will, at all events, be then no such great disparity between us, and I need not say that all you have will be made your own, as surely as lawyers can make it. I know," he went on, in answer to her gesture of impatience, "that nothing of this seems to you of importance, but I must keep my honour untarnished for your sake. Then, again, there is your promise to your father, to obey your uncle in all things till you come of age. He obtained it, as I believe, under a false impression of his brother's character, and, was it possible for him to do so, he would now release you from it gladly. Still you gave it him."

"On his death-bed," murmured the girl solemnly.

"Yes; that, of course, in your eyes makes it the more binding. Would it be right, I ask myself, to persuade you to set that sacred promise at naught, even to make you happy—to save you from what I know must seem unmitigated wretchedness for two long years. I ask this, I say, of myself, and not of you. It would be cruel and cowardly to put the burthen of reply upon my darling."

"Nevertheless, dear, let me answer for myself," she put in gravely. "You are right, Charley; I felt it in my heart—no, not in my heart. My heart, Heaven help me, is pleading the other way——"

"And mine, Heaven knows!—and mine," he cried passionately. "Oh! do not let us talk of it, or all is lost."

Once more he took her in his arms and clasped her close. It was a dangerous moment. He felt the "Let us fly!" rising to his lips, and well understood that if once they

passed them she would not—could not—deny him. Love was strong in him, but duty, or what he deemed was duty, was stronger. The kiss he pressed upon her mouth, and which almost ruined all, was the seal of victory. Having gained it, he would fain have made no more allusion to what it had cost him, nor retraced one step of that perilous way. Man-like he would have extracted his full of joy from the passing moment without a thought of the bitterness beyond; but with the girl it was different. Though she had made up her mind to bear them, she could not dismiss the miseries of the solitary and sunless future.

"Two years—two years," she murmured; "between now and then what may not happen, Charley?"

"To be sure, what may not?" he replied, cheerfully, purposely mistaking her meaning. "There is no knowing what may turn up to our advantage. Perhaps before twenty-four hours are over our heads the sky may clear."

"How can it clear, Charley? In twenty-four hours there will be leagues of sea between us, and with every succeeding hour more leagues. It is dreadful, it is horrible!" She shuddered and shut her eyes, as though the outlook she pictured was of a physical kind. He regarded her with a hesitating look, as though he had something to tell her, but doubted whether it would be wise to reveal it. "Two years," she went on; "we may both be dead, or, worse, one of us may be dead."

"Faithful and true, living or dead," he murmured, smiling. It was the refrain of a song they used to sing together, and at the well-known words she smiled upon him with ineffable tenderness.

"I shall remember that, be sure," she said. "I shall be yours, and yours only, whether you live or die, until my life's end."

"And I yours, Edie. But I say again let us hope for the best. I know what you are thinking of—that line we used to read together, describing the vain and commonplace

attempts at consolation, 'And vacant chaff well meant for grain.' Yet perhaps there may be some grain of hope for us."

"Of hope?" she put in eagerly. "Then you have some plan, some scheme. Oh, Charley, do not hide it from me. Give me some crumb of comfort."

A look of alarm had crossed his face at her first words, but before she had done he had regained his composure. "Well, well, since you insist upon my telling it you—though the whole thing is uncertain and in the clouds—the fact is, my cousin, the Attorney-General, may possibly give me some work to do in Calcutta, which, though of a temporary kind, will be a good excuse for my coming out to India and seeing how you are going on."

"Oh, my darling, how delightful! But why have you kept this from me?"

"Well, for one thing, as I say, because the matter was not quite settled."

"Then it is settled now. It is not in the clouds," she exclaimed, rapturously. "Oh! when shall you be coming? If I only knew the date, that will be something to live for and to look forward to, to cast its sunshine through the mist and gloom of my existence."

"It is the shadow, and not the sunshine, that projects itself in that way, my darling," he answered, smiling, "but you must really not be so excited about it. That was one of the reasons which prevented my disclosing my little secret to you. I was afraid that you would build too much upon it, and show it by your manner. It would never do for Uncle Ernest to suspect just yet that I had any such plan in view. You must not suddenly throw off your woes, remember."

"Throw off my woes, Charley," she murmured reproachfully. "How little you guess their weight. It is true that what you have told me is a gleam of sunshine! nay, for I must not be ungrateful, it gladdens my heart to its very core, but there is no fear of my spirits being too high.

And when may I expect you? When do you sail from England?" she added, with access of interest that hardly fitted with the depression she had striven to paint. Again that look of alarm came over the young man's features, but this time accompanied by one of self-reproach.

"Perhaps in a year's time," he said deliberately; then, as her face fell from expectation to extreme despondency, he added, "Or perhaps even earlier."

"In a year's time," she murmured like a melancholy but distant echo. "Great Heavens! what a year it will be!"

"Now, really, Edie, this is not being grateful," he remonstrated, "nor even reasonable. One-half of the time of our probation has suddenly been lopped away, and your face is no brighter for it."

"Because all that makes it bright is about to leave it," she answered simply. "We have been here—I know not how long, but it seems a moment—it may be hours. If my uncle returns and finds me from home, or what he calls home, he will be full of suspicion."

"You are right, my darling, as you always are. It is most important that he should suspect nothing. Now one more kiss, and then farewell."

"A long farewell," she moaned despairingly.

"Perhaps not so long as we think," he answered cheerfully.

"Good-bye, sweetheart, good-bye."

He disengaged himself from her clinging arms with an effort, pressed his lips to her forehead, and walked quickly away. He did not even turn his head, and her woman's instinct guessed the reason. He had already put his beard on, and he did not wish that her last look should not remind her of himself. As she gazed after his retreating form her tears began to fall for the first time. While he had been with her she could not afford to waste her time, and dim with weeping the sight that he would gladden no more. She watched him till he disappeared down the

neighbouring bastion into the parade ground, then slowly and sadly retraced her steps to the hotel. The cloud upon her spirits that had lifted a little, descended again; the pain of parting with her lover had, at all events for the present, done away with his good news. There was no fear of Uncle Ernest suspecting a hitch in his plans from any alteration in his unhappy niece's manner.

CHAPTER IV.

ON BOARD.

THERE is nothing that shows the amazing adaptability of the human mind to changed conditions more than the philosophy with which it accepts life on board ship. The adaptability of the body is generally, it is true, even greater, but in this particular case the body, or a very important part of it, is, strange to say, conservative. It resents the change from land to sea exceedingly. How any civilized being, much more one brought up, as the saying goes, "in the lap of luxury," can voluntarily and with a light heart exchange *terra firma*, with its safety and its comforts, for the horrors of the heaving deep, is simply inexplicable. Even Dr. Johnson, who was not very particular, expresses a natural loathing at marine arrangements. In his time, indeed, passenger vessels were very different from what they are now, or even from what they were at the date of our story. But accepting all the modern rubbish about 'floating palaces' and exquisite viands (which, nevertheless, all taste as if they had been boiled in the same cloth), and substituting 'bowers' for bad berths, the fact still remains that one is "cabined, cribbed, confined" in a manner that one would not put up with for twenty-four hours, much more for whole weeks at a time, on shore. I say nothing about being shaken about with such violence as in any respectable city in the world

not visited by an earthquake would ensure for the victim the protection of the police, nor of being the spectator of such behaviour in one's fellow-creatures as is never seen out of a hospital or spoken of in decent society. I leave out of the question the almost incredible fact that persons who can afford to escape it—not by the sacrifice of half their fortune, as one would suppose they would gladly do, but by the payment of a few extra pounds—will even submit to live in the same cabin—a dog-kennel—with a poor wretch thus afflicted for many days and nights, whereas, if you made any such proposition to them as regards travelling by land, they would take it as an insult, and knock you down. Apart from these unspeakable horrors, the difference between life on sea and life on shore is enormous—far greater than that between poverty and riches, or between sickness and health, upon the same plane; and though, of course, some people absolutely like a sea voyage, as there are others who like wintering in the Arctic regions or climbing hills, the comparative indifference with which the general public exchange the one for the other is a proof of the fitness of the human soul for any fate.

To do her justice, Miss Eleanor Norbury was not in this respect to be mentioned among the common herd. Though it was not the first time she had gone by ship to India, she looked forward to the voyage on board the *Ganges* with anything but pleasure. She knew what the comforts of a cabin and the pleasures of a cuddy were even in calm weather.

“She had had enough of action and of motion, she

 Rolled to larboard, rolled to starboard, when the surge was seething free,”

and had she been left to her own choice, she would have rocked on ‘C’ springs in her carriage. She did not deceive herself with any of the smooth commonplaces about “freedom of life at sea.” She called it the freedom of a

hencoop, and she did not deceive other people. Indeed, in describing how matters would be to her fellow-voyagers who had not had her experience, she drew them—doubtless with good intentions, and to prevent unreasonable expectations—even worse than they were—"dipped her pencil in the hues of eclipse." The consequence of which was, that poor Aunt Sophia was half dead with fright before she left the packet-boat that took them out in the evening over a glassy sea to the *Ganges*. In Edith's case the evil auguries of her cousin fell upon deaf ears. When we are in sorrow we are more adaptable than ever; because we care little what becomes of us. The troubles of the mind, save in the case of acute physical pain, over-ride and obliterate those of the body, and much more the apprehension of them. The little party were received on board with very unusual marks of respect; for Mr. Norbury's position "in the company" was well known. He had made special application to go by the *Ganges*, which, as a rule, carried no passengers at all; and every arrangement had been made for his comfort and convenience. Captain Head, a florid, resolute-looking man, with iron-gray hair, and quiet, intelligent eyes, welcomed them in person. "I trust," he said, "Mr. Norbury, that your party will find everything to their satisfaction; we have no other ladies on board to divide our attentions with them."

"No other ladies, you say," answered the other quickly; "no other gentlemen either, I hope. I thought that had been understood at the India House."

The captain shrugged his shoulders and smiled, but not in a very conciliatory manner. He did not like his passenger's tone. "I know nothing of any arrangement outside my ship," he said, with an emphasis that implied that over all inside he was master, and not to be dictated to even by a member of the council. "There are two gentlemen only with us beside yourself."

"It's no matter," says Mr. Norbury, loftily, to which

the captain replied with another smile that seemed to suggest that it was no matter whether it mattered to Mr. Norbury or not.

Then he turned to the ladies, whom he had already respectfully saluted, and addressed to them a few words of genial courtesy. They were uttered with the simplicity and frankness of a sailor, but not without a certain dignity. The captain of an Indiaman in those days was in a position little inferior to that of a man-of-war, which, indeed, the *Ganges* herself might also have been termed. She carried guns, was of 600 tons burthen, and was manned by a crew of nearly 100 men. His manner impressed the ladies very differently. Miss Eleanor thought it was familiar, and even impertinent. Those domineering airs that belong to most Europeans who have lived in the East, and which, even in England, remain at the best dormant, had revived within her. She looked upon the captain as an uncovenanted person. Aunt Sophia, on the other hand, dazzled by his uniform, and charmed by his politeness, felt as though she was being patronized by royalty. His resolute countenance gave her confidence; the sword by his side seemed to be a guarantee against pirates, a danger which had presented itself to her mind in vivid colours.

Edith, whose beautiful but melancholy face had evidently awakened his interest, was greatly pleased with the captain. She recognized something paternal and benevolent about him, which she had been far from anticipating, and which seemed to whisper to her, "This man will be my friend."

The officers of the ship were then introduced to the party. The first mate, Mr. Marston, a gentleman of thirty-five or so, and already inclining to baldness, tall, very polite, but rather prim.

Mr. Redmayne, the second mate, a young fellow of five-and-twenty, but looking even younger, very handsome, but rather shy.

Mr. Bates, the third mate, much older than the other two, a squat, powerfully-built man, marked with small-pox, and not looking like a gentleman at all.

Mr. Doyle, the surgeon, a jovial, middle-aged Irishman, with eyes sparkling with good humour, and a mouth which, even when not smiling, seemed always about to smile.

At supper the little party was joined by one of the gentleman passengers—Mr. Ainsworth, a clergyman; a stout, pale, elderly man, with a face totally hairless, but with the expression of a sheep. Without an invitation, he favoured the company with a long, extempore grace, during the delivery of which Mr. Norbury's face was a study. "Who the deuce is he?" he whispered indignantly to the captain; "not one of the company's chaplains, surely."

"I think not; he is a *protégé* of the secretary. You know his leaning. I believe he is a missionary; an inoffensive man enough."

"But that is just what he isn't," put in Mr. Norbury; "he is most offensive. The idea of an uncovenanted minister volunteering grace—and such a grace."

"Just so. He did it at dinner. He calls it asking a blessing. I must take an opportunity of telling him that I am chaplain on board my own ship. He won't do it again for some time, however, if I am not mistaken. It is coming on to blow, and gentlemen of that complexion and habit of body—eh?"

"I hope so, indeed," said Mr. Norbury, piously. At present, at all events, Mr. Ainsworth was in possession of his health and full flow of conversation, which, however, he addressed mostly to the ladies. He gave his especial attention—as was right and proper—to the eldest of the three; but it was but indifferently reciprocated. Aunt Sophia's mind was too much preoccupied with the novelty of her situation, her forebodings as to what was to happen when the ship began to move—for it was at present at

anchor and almost motionless—to listen to conversation, however edifying. Her attempts to do so were quite lamentable.

“The whole question of the lost tribes,” Mr. Ainsworth was remarking, after a long dissertation on the subject, “is intensely interesting. What do you think, Miss Norbury?”

“No doubt. Do you think they were lost going out to India?” hazarded Aunt Sophia.

Edith, compelled to smile in spite of her troubles, had to explain that her relative was very nervous and apprehensive about the sea.

It was the captain’s advice that the ladies should retire to their cabins before they began the voyage. “What do you say, Mr. Doyle?” he inquired, referring to the scientific authority.

“I say ditto, sir,” returned the other, with a rich Irish accent. “I wish I could tell them, as the nurses tell the children—‘Pretty dears, you will sleep without rocking.’ But as that’s impossible, it’s better to sleep before the rocking begins.”

Aunt Sophia rose immediately, with a pale face, to act upon the prescription at once; and Eleanor also withdrew to her cabin. Edith asked permission of the captain to go on deck.

“The deck is yours, madam,” was the gallant reply, “but I am afraid you will find us just for to-night in a sad state of confusion.”

Edith had an idea that her uncle had made an objection, which was overruled. The captain gave her his arm up the cuddy stairs. Mr. Redmayne followed with rugs; Mr. Doyle with a footstool. Doubtless had not the first and third mates been on duty they would have also volunteered their services. In two minutes she found herself in a comfortable arm-chair on deck, watching the preparations for departure, and won for the moment from the contem-

plation of her woes by the novelty and strangeness of the scene. There was a pilot on the poop, who roared out to the chief mate what he had to say, like a candidate on a platform bent on making himself heard by the very last man on the skirts of his audience; the prim and polite chief mate, transformed into an angry brawler, repeated his orders to the boatswain; and the boatswain, incensed, as it seemed, at receiving them second hand, addressed the same inflammatory language, but with even greater emphasis, to the crew. Then there was a shuffling of naked feet upon the deck, and a number of men seized each a bar of wood and stuck them into the capstan, and then standing between the spokes and leaning upon them with heavy hands and brawny chests, seemed suddenly turned to stone. If an enchanter's wand had been waved which had changed tumult to silence, and action to tranquillity, the transformation could not have been more complete. Then piercing the silence came the shrill note of a fiddle, and keeping time with their feet to its air, the sailors began to stamp and tramp round the capstan, which, with shriek on shriek, protested against the outrage, till the anchor swung at the bows. Then the ropes began to rattle and the great sails to flap, and fill, and strain above, and the waves, as the huge ship cut her way through them, to swirl, and hiss, and foam below.

Under any circumstances, the girl's mind would have been filled with the interest and excitement of the scene, which, even as it was, she could not watch unmoved; but when the tumult was over, and the big ship began to speed upon her way before the freshening breeze, and the 'Fair Island,' looking doubly fair in the calm moonlight, to fade upon her sight, the thoughts which had been always present, like a dark undercurrent in a shallow lake, of what she was leaving behind her, began to gather strength and volume; her hands dropped on her lap and her eyes filled with tears. Had any one on board that teeming ship

such cause for sorrow as she? Others, indeed, had parted with those dearest to them, but it was not for years: after the voyage out and home they would see them again; and in any case it was their business to be going out. But she had no business. She was going into unnecessary exile—the victim of mere cruelty and caprice.

“It is getting late, Edith; it is time you went to your cabin.” It was her uncle’s voice which thus addressed her, in cold and authoritative tones—more authoritative, nay even dictatorial, she thought, than he had ever used to her.

“Thank you; no, I prefer the deck at present.” Her spirit was roused. She had obeyed him in grave matters, and brought wretchedness upon herself in so doing; she was not going to submit to petty tyranny.

He removed the cigar he was smoking from his mouth, and looked at her attentively. She returned his glance with equal steadiness.

“You do not seem to me to be in a right frame of mind,” he said.

“It is possible you may not be the best judge of that,” was her quiet reply.

“I am the best judge at all events of what is the best course, and the only course for you to take, Miss Edith, and that is—Submission.”

“Heaven knows I have submitted,” exclaimed the girl with a gesture of despair, “too far, too far.”

“In the letter,” he said, ignoring those last words of hers, “but not in the spirit. I have watched you very narrowly since—since you have been in possession of my sentiments with regard to a certain subject; and I see you still hanker after the forbidden thing. Now, pray understand once and for all, that you will never get it. I may have had some difficulty—there is no harm in confessing it now—in making matters safe while we were on shore and in England. I could not well have locked you up, and

your attractions might well have tempted your needy lover to some bold stroke."

"He is a man of honour," said Edith haughtily. For the moment she felt inclined to tell him that that very day would have given her her freedom but for that fact.

Mr. Norbury shrugged his shoulders.

"Unhappily, he is also a man of straw, which is a fatal objection to him. That you have seen the last of him is quite certain. I dare say you thought it strange that I objected to your maid coming with you. Shall I tell you the reason?"

"The matter is no longer of any consequence," she answered indifferently. "I suppose it was for cheapness."

Under his shaggy eyebrows his eyes flashed fire.

"That is an insult. You know very well that that is not my way; I have denied you nothing that money can purchase, unless, indeed, the gentleman upon whom you are wasting your affections comes under that head."

She had been about to apologize to him for her uncalled-for sarcasm, but that sneer on his part froze every impulse of conciliation and left her marble.

"No, miss, I dismissed your maid because I knew that persons in her rank of life ignore all disparities in love-making—save that of years—and sympathize—"

"I do not take counsel of my lady's-maid, Uncle Ernest," interrupted the girl with spirit.

"I am glad to hear it. But, at all events, her presence would have had associations for you which would have been mischievous. It was for that reason and for your sake that I left her behind. I exhort and entreat you now, for your own sake, to cease from vain regrets. The last straw that bound you to that unworthy young man has now, believe me, been severed."

"It will hold as long as life holds," she answered firmly.

"I have been very patient with you hitherto, Edith. I have made allowance for your inexperience and impulsive

nature; but you may try me too far. I am your uncle, but remember that I am also your guardian."

"I know it well," she answered bitterly. "You have taken advantage of your position to the uttermost."

"What do you mean?" he cried, fire again flashing from his eyes. "Do you dare to impute—" he stopped, his passion arrested by her look of wonder. "It was very unpleasant to me to exert my authority," he added quietly "but I did my duty."

"And I mine," she said. "What more is it you ask of me?"

"Mr. Layton's letters—you have four of them, I know. I don't want to read them, of course; but I must see them destroyed with my own eyes."

"That you never shall. I will die first."

"Then you will die soon, for I will have them within twenty-four hours." With that he turned on his heel and left her very terrified but not subdued. She did not dislike him, perhaps, more than she had done of late, but she was more afraid of him. She had known that he had an iron hand, but she had never seen it without the velvet glove before.

CHAPTER V

THE PASSENGER.

EDITH obeyed her uncle in one thing at once; she ran down to her cabin. Those letters he had spoken of were there, and though an hour ago such an idea would never have entered her mind, she thought him quite capable of possessing himself of them by fraud or even force. That she possessed some correspondence of her lover's was natural enough for him to take for granted, but how had he come to know that she had had four letters—exactly four? Nobody knew it, as she had thought, except herself;

nobody to her knowledge had even seen them. They were kept in a secret place; she had often read them, it was true, but only when she was alone. She tried to think whether she had ever been interrupted in that occupation. She had a vague idea that on one occasion this had occurred, but she could not recall by whom. It must have been by one of three persons only, her maid Selina, her cousin Eleanor, or Aunt Sophia. Selina, she felt sure, would never have revealed the fact, for she sympathized heart and soul with her young mistress; so far her uncle had been right. Aunt Sophia was equally to be trusted, not because she was a partisan, for she was not; though she pitied her sorrows, she had scrupulously avoided taking sides with her, and she was not one to make mischief. If anybody had told of her secret treasure it must, then, have been Eleanor. Her cousin had not behaved kindly or even justly in the matter of Mr. Layton, but she shrank from thinking her capable of meanness and treachery. If it were so, her own position was even more deplorable than she had imagined it to be. It was terrible to be without friends, but how much worse would it be to be surrounded by enemies and spies. After all, the letters had come by post, and Mr. Norbury might possibly have taken note of their arrival; even that, however, presupposed an amount of surveillance for which she was unprepared, and which alarmed her.

Here were the letters safe enough. She took them from their hiding-place with the reverence of a priest who handles some frail and precious relic, and read them over again in their order. The three first were full of happiness; the fourth, written after the happiness was threatened, was full of hope. In none of them was the writer importunate or pressing, as is the manner of lovers. At first, indeed, he had hesitated to accept her troth as binding on herself. "You are so young and ignorant of the world," he said, "that it seems taking an unfair advantage

of you. I feel that I have no right to bind you with so long a chain. With me—who have nothing to lose in the interim—it is different. Let me be bound, not you.” Some people may think that this was ‘magnificent,’ but it was not ‘love.’ To Edith it seemed love of a rare and chivalrous sort; but she had declined his terms. He had warned her from the first that Mr. Norbury would not give his consent to their marriage; that at the best they must needs wait till she came of age; but that she was well content to wait for him. “I am yours, whether soon or late,” she wrote, and it was not in human nature that he should decline the sacrifice.

Then came the time in which the two next letters were written—hours of blissful content, days “when it was always afternoon”—letters written and read in dreamland. Then the day when her uncle put his foot down to stamp love out—love which, like the sweet-smelling herb, yields only the more fragrance for being crushed—and after it, and their forced separation, the fourth letter. It was this she held most precious because it applied to her present position and formed the guide to her future conduct. “We are parted,” it said, “but only as water is parted by the hand. No power on earth can prevent our meeting again if only we are true to each other. Whatever happens remember that every day brings you nearer to me and me nearer to you. You will do me the justice to say (to yourself) that I have never striven to set you against your uncle; I will not do it now, but in my opinion he will leave no stone unturned to effect his object. It is even possible that he will not always confine himself to persuasion to win you over to his way of thinking; the thought of his being severe or unkind to you makes me shudder, but I fear that he is capable of such a change of conduct. If I do him wrong I owe him an apology, and shall be rejoiced to make it.”

He had not done him wrong. Her uncle’s behaviour to

her that evening, his voice, his manner, his threatening words had proved her lover in the right; thanks to him, she had been prepared for this change, though, even as it was, it alarmed and shocked her. Doubtless if Charley had known of her guardian's intention to carry her to India, his letter would have been more outspoken, but it was written previous to their knowledge of this plan, of which, indeed, they had had no suspicion until within a few days of its accomplishment. She had written to inform her lover of it, and doubtless, distrustful of any letter reaching her, his presence that morning had been his reply. Even without it, the letter she held in her hand would have strengthened and supported her under her present trial; for "faithful and true, living or dead" was its burthen throughout; but with his last words ringing in her ears, his last looks—apt illustration of that loving text still visible to her mind's eye, it seemed as though it would have sustained her under very martyrdom. Uncle Ernest had been wise—after his false lights—to endeavour to wrest this prop and stay from her—that dear hand-writing would be a source from which she drew courage and content whenever she looked at it; and neither threats nor cajolery should ever induce her to part with it.

In the place of concealment where she had hitherto kept the letters, a secret drawer in her desk, she had no longer any confidence, for she felt that her uncle would have no scruples in employing any means to get possession of them. Where, then, in her cabin could she conceal them? She had read Edgar Poe's story of the 'Purloined Letter,' and remembered his direction that the most open place, as likely to be the least suspected, was the safest. In that case the envelope had been turned inside out and the missive left about, for any chance comer to take up. She shrank, however, from that notion of the chance comer—in the shape of the stewardess, for example—whom idle curiosity might prompt to examine this treasure, and,

moreover, there were four letters, and not one, to be hidden. She thought of disposing each in a secret place, so that if one or two should be stolen from her, the others would be left; but how could she endure the loss of one or two? In the end she resolved to carry them about with her, and sewed them into her apparel. "All day long to fall and rise, upon her balmy bosom with—not, alas! her laughter—but her sighs."

Then with a tolerably tranquil mind she sought her berth. She was one of those exceptional individuals who are born good sailors, and suffered no misery from the motion of the vessel. That Aunt Sophia in the next cabin was not so fortunate was made apparent to her by various groanings and complainings; the prescription of the Irish doctor of going to sleep early had not, it seemed, been by any means successful with her, probably because she had been unable to put it into practice. She could do her aunt no good, she knew, even if she could have visited her, which, of course, she could not do, but the idea of that good lady's tortures made her feel very uncomfortable. Moreover, though not otherwise inconvenienced, the beating and bumping of the ship, and the other novel accompaniments to her situation, kept her awake for some time. At last she fell into a heavy slumber.

In the dead of the night she awoke with that unaccountable suddenness and consciousness of something having happened, with which we are all familiar. The wind and the sea had risen, and with shrieks and tumult, unfamiliar to a landsman's ear, but amid them there seemed to be, or rather to have been, a sound more recognizable and commonplace, as though some one had stumbled against an article of furniture in the cabin. Such a circumstance was impossible, since she had locked her door, and, indeed, one glance round the little room, dimly lighted from above, was sufficient to assure her that she was alone, and everything around her as she had left it. No doubt it had been

some sharp shock of the sea, which has innumerable ways of announcing its presence, from the gentle tap of the school-girl, who, standing on tiptoe, can just lift the knocker, to the thundering summons of the fireman. She must in future prepare herself for every description of disturbance.

Nevertheless, she did not easily fall asleep again. She lay in that sort of half-dreamy state which rejects the present and the future, and concerns itself with the past only. She was once more in the old cathedral town in which she had spent most of her youth. She walked again with her father in the water meadows that surrounded it, and heard in the distance the soft, melancholy chimes cleaving the summer air. She wandered alone in the cloisters, while the swelling anthem "shook the prophets blazoned on the panes" of the great eastern window; she knelt in the stately fane and heard the sweet voices of the choristers talking (as her childish fancy had painted them) with God. Was all that past and done with (she had just sense enough to wonder), or was it, perhaps, at the judgment day, to be all gone over again? What becomes of our lives when we have lived them? They cannot be surely as suits of clothes, which, having worn out, we discard and see no more of. Short as her existence had been, it had been divided, as most of our lives are, into different epochs. Her residence at her uncle's house in town seemed not only a new existence, but the experience of another person. If, at least, she was the same person who had passed through both, her identity was not recognizable. Though she knew that the latter phase had been passed in the world and the former out of it, the latter seemed less real, more like playing at life than when she was a child and did play at it; though she saw so many more of her fellow-creatures in it, she felt more lonely. Her father had gone to heaven and left her, and there was no one to occupy his place. She seemed almost as in a

strange land where the people were kind to her, in a certain superficial fashion, but it was not that native land, every flower of which she had known so well, and where by a very few she had been beloved. Scenes of fashion passed before her half-shut eyes—gay dresses, brilliantly-lit rooms, and crowded companies. Then one man, tall and comely; less courtly than some others, perhaps, but more gracious and tender; again and again she saw him; then when he was not by she saw him. She was, somehow, no longer alone in the world. There was some one to care for her; some one to love her, as her father had done, though in another way. Then he, too, was threatened with death, or was it herself that was threatened? It was all one. There was cold and thick darkness all about her, when suddenly his voice was heard.

She was broad awake in an instant. The light of morning, nay, of day, was flooding the little cabin. She knew in a moment where she was, and recognized the present in all particulars. He was a hundred miles or so away from her, and the sea between them, and yet she had heard his voice. Something terrible, then, had happened to him. She had read of such things. How, in the moment of dissolution, the spirit of one who loves us is permitted for one fleeting instant to make its presence known to us, though far away, and in some vague manner to give its last farewell.

Edith Norbury was not deficient in common sense, but the perspiration gathered on her brow as this idea occurred to her. The daylight could not quench the superstitious terror, nor the sounds of life and motion that now pervaded the ship drown the recollection of that beloved voice. What it had said she knew not, but it had spoken, and there was no mistaking those well-loved and familiar tones. The impression was so strong and vivid, that it even removed the remembrance of the noise she had heard in the night, till she rose and began to dress. Then, indeed, it

recurred to her with redoubled strength and significance, for the four letters from her lover, which she had sewn into her garment, had, to her intense amazement, disappeared. At first she imagined herself to be the victim of some delusion of the senses. She had not remembered, perhaps, where she had put them aright, and had only dreamt of changing their place of security, but on examining the secret drawer with feverish haste, she found it, as she expected, empty. Then, again, it struck her that the agitation and excitement of her mind might have induced her to walk in her sleep, and unconsciously remove the articles on which her waking thoughts had dwelt with such intensity. But the closest search failed to find them; they were gone. Her ears, then, had not deceived her; some one had entered her cabin in the night and stolen her treasures. Yet her door was locked, and the key still remained on the inside. As to the window, it was, of course, a mere bull's-eye, and looked on the sea. The mystery was inexplicable, and but for the noise she had heard, would, perhaps, have been associated in her mind with that equally mysterious voice; but as it was, what had happened was only too palpable. Whatever means had been adopted by the perpetrator, she had been robbed, and the sense of loss swallowed up her wonder at the means. Whether her uncle had been the actual committer of the crime or not, though the fact of his being so would naturally have turned her dislike of him into disgust, it was clear to her that he was the real offender. Priceless as the letters were to her, none but himself could attach any value to them. That he did so, she had his own words in proof the night before, coupled with the assurance that he meant to have them. The inference was clear and fair that he had got them now.

As she stepped out of her cabin, intending to visit Aunt Sophia, she met the stewardess, who informed her that that lady had had a disturbed night (a very euphonious phrase, poor soul, for her actual experience), and had cost

Miss Eleanor one, who had been in attendance upon her ; the two ladies had, therefore, given her instructions that they were not to be disturbed.

As it still wanted some time to the breakfast hour, Edith went up on deck, and took her seat where she had sat the previous night. A very different view now presented itself to her ; the ship was out of sight of land, and the wild water—for so it seemed to her, though there was but a slight breeze blowing—foamed and sparkled on all sides of her, while beyond lay the boundless blue. Under any other circumstances the lightness and freshness of the scene must needs have put life and spirit into her. But the face of nature, whether she smile or frown, affects us but little when the heart within us is heavy. We repay her callousness to our own sorrows with a like indifference.

Presently her uncle came up to her. She looked up to him boldly and searchingly, but he did not shrink from her gaze. If he was conscious of having committed the baseness of which she suspected him, he had schooled himself to conceal it.

“I hope you have slept well, Edith?” he said, with a fleeting smile. “But I need not ask ; you look as fresh as a daisy. Your aunt and cousin, I hear, have been by no means so fortunate.” His tone was natural enough, and if his manner was a little embarrassed, so it had always been in these later days after their disagreement about Mr. Layton : if there was anything suspicious about his address, it was that he talked rather more quickly than usual, without giving her time to reply.

“I am quite well, thank you,” she said coldly.

“That’s well. I hope the sea breezes have given you a good appetite. There is the gong for breakfast ; let me give you my arm to the cuddy.”

The ship was pitching sufficiently to make the refusal of his offer a positive rudeness, but as she laid her hand upon his arm, her fingers seemed to shrink from grasping it.

Her head swam round so, that if he had not clasped her close with his elbow she would have fallen.

"Trust to me, who have my sea-legs on," he said, as he led her to the companion, where she gladly exchanged her hold of him for that of the banister.

"Come," said the captain, speaking in his cheery voice from the breakfast-table, "here is one of our ladies, at least. Good morning, Miss Norbury. You know every one here, I think, save the latest addition to our company. Mr. Charles Layton, Miss Edith Norbury." Her lover, who was sitting at the table with the rest, rose up to greet her.

She was dimly conscious of hearing a frightful execration from her uncle, a high-pitched remonstrance from the captain, and then the cabin swam round with her, and she remembered no more.

CHAPTER VI.

THE ACCUSATION.

"It often takes them this way when it doesn't the other. No one, much less a fragile and delicate young creature like this, can go to sea for the first time without paying her footing in meal or in malt."

These were the words, uttered in an Hibernian accent, soft and strong (like the best Irish whisky), which fell upon Edith's ears as she regained consciousness. But it was not till afterwards, though she felt that they were kindly meant, that she had a clear perception of their motive and significance. Mr. Doyle knew well enough that her indisposition had been caused by some mental shock (at the nature of which he could only make a shrewd guess), and he had done his best to conceal the fact from the spectators. Fortunately, though his success in deceiving them was doubtful, they were, as it happened, only

five in number. Besides the captain and Mr. Bates, and the involuntary cause of the catastrophe, Mr. Charles Layton himself, there was no one as yet at the breakfast-table. Save an interchange of looks, which, however, had been expressive enough—Mr. Norbury had glared at Mr. Layton and then at the captain, like a tiger who cannot make up his mind which of two victims to devour first, to which the captain had replied with indignant astonishment, and the young barrister with quiet scorn—nothing had passed in the mean time between them. Edith's fainting fit, if so short a seizure could be so called, had only lasted a few seconds ; perhaps there was an inner consciousness of her lover's presence, even in that overturn of mind, which acted as a restorative.

"If you went to your cabin and lay down a bit?" continued Mr. Doyle, tentatively.

"Thank you, no ; I am quite well now ; I would rather stay where I am," said Edith, with a forced smile.

"Quite right, it's the breakfast that's the thing for her," observed the accommodating doctor.

Her uncle was about to object, but the captain interposed in a tone of authority :

"It is the doctor who is master in a case of this kind, Mr. Norbury, and we must have no mutiny on board the *Ganges*, if you please."

It was only the natural chivalry of a disposition which always leant towards the weaker side, and the ladies, which had dictated this speech ; but to Mr. Norbury's ear it only corroborated the conviction that the whole affair had been planned beforehand between the captain and Mr. Layton. He had been bribed to take 'that adventurer' out to India for the express purpose of prosecuting his forbidden suit. If the pilot had not left—and Layton had doubtless delayed his own appearance till he had done so, for that very reason—he would have put niece and daughter into his boat and returned to England ; but as it was, he felt that

for the time he was powerless. The captain was master of the situation, and until they reached Calcutta could hardly be dismissed from the Company's service for conspiracy.

Nor could Edith be locked up, with a sentry at the door of her cabin with orders to shoot any one who attempted to communicate with her without her uncle's permission. Language could not have expressed his fury in any case, but the necessity which prudence enjoined on him to keep silence seemed almost dangerous to life. He took his seat at the table half-suffocated with rage and resentment, while the captain pressed the breakfast dainties on Edith's attention, and Mr. Charles Layton sipped his tea. There are certain explosives on which a change of temperature has a very disastrous effect, and the mere contemplation of the young barrister's coolness drove Mr. Norbury's temper, which was at a white heat, to the verge of bursting.

The politest of bows and the gravest of smiles had been all the acknowledgment which Layton had given of Edith's presence. There had been only just so much of recognition in it as, to one who knew the position in which he stood with reference to her belongings, would have seemed becoming. He had met her before, it seemed, but not under circumstances to encourage familiarity. Happily for their strained relations—a phrase which fell far short of describing the state of tension of Mr. Norbury's mind—Mr. Ainsworth now made his appearance, and, knowing nothing of what had happened, relieved the strain by commonplace inquiries. How had Miss Norbury passed her first night on board ship? How were the other ladies? How was Mr. Layton himself, who had shown such suspicious prudence in his early retirement the previous evening? “Judging by the cheerfulness of your voice this morning, which I heard before I was stirring myself,” he concluded, “I conjecture your fears were groundless.”

Up to that moment Edith had scarcely understood one word of what had been addressed to her, and had replied to

everything with the accurate but sententious brevity of an automaton ; but with this reference to her lover, intelligence, and with it recollection, returned to her. The events of the previous night, with what she had thought was the hallucination of the morning, the hearing of Charley's voice, at once returned to her.

So far, then, from its having been the last farewell of his departing spirit, it was his first 'good-morrow' on the deep! Instead of being parted from her, he had been reunited to her! What matter though they had stolen those dear memorials of him from their hiding-place, since he was here in person and needed no reminder. Her soul was so filled with gratitude that it had no room for wonder. Here was her lover under the same roof, not as on land in a house from which he could be ejected ; not as a guest ; but as a tenant, with equal rights with those of her uncle himself—and for the moment she was contented with that assurance without seeking to know how it had all come to pass.

It is one of the few advantages that breakfast on ship-board possesses over the same meal on shore, that people drop in and out without ceremony, and Edith found no difficulty in making her exit from the cuddy alone and resuming her old position on deck. Neither her uncle nor her lover followed her, much, no doubt, as each would have liked to have done so, and held private converse with her—though of a very different kind. The one, it was easy to guess, was yearning to pour out his heart before her, while the other was scarcely less impatient to give her a piece of his mind. Though wholly innocent of any such knowledge, she could not conceal from herself that Mr. Norbury might naturally enough conclude that she had been cognizant of Mr. Layton's being on board the *Ganges*, and have good ground for resentment on that account. The idea of such subtlety and dissimulation being imputed to her would, under other circumstances, have distressed her greatly ; but her uncle's behaviour to her on the previous

evening, and especially that theft of the letters, which it was impossible not to lay at his door, had aroused her just indignation. Without provocation, and believing her to be utterly defenceless and in his power, he had commenced hostilities against her; and she would perhaps have felt little compunction even if by any act of her own she had secured to herself the presence of this earnest and devoted ally. Her only uneasiness as to the matter was as respected Aunt Sophia, whose good opinion she valued much; for the moment, however, it was impossible to clear herself in that good lady's eyes; in those of her cousin she was less solicitous to do so—first, because, after what had passed, any mention to her of Mr. Layton would have been distasteful; and, secondly, because she had a shrewd suspicion that Eleanor would not be willing to be convinced.

Though she had hitherto submitted herself so obediently to her uncle's will, Edith had plenty of spirit, and it was now thoroughly aroused. Like a player who thinks he has the game for certain, her uncle had shown his cards too soon, and had even had the imprudence to let her know that he would stick at nothing in the means he took to win with them. As she sat so deep in thought that the stir and movement in the ship above and around her was almost unheard, she suddenly heard her uncle's voice. It was not addressing her, nor was he to be seen, so that at first it gave her no little alarm; but presently she perceived that the sound came through a cabin skylight close beside her. The tones were low and full of suppressed passion, but so distinct that every word was audible. If the idea that she was playing the involuntary part of eavesdropper had occurred to Edith, which, truth to say, it did not, so intensely was her interest excited by what was going on that she could not have stirred from her place. Her limbs had suddenly become rigid: yet she could hardly have likened herself to a statue, for a statue has many organs, whereas she was all ear.

"And now, sir, that we are alone together," said Mr. Norbury, "perhaps you may consider that the time has come for an explanation of your presence here."

"Indeed," replied a quiet voice she knew, "I am not aware that any such is owed you, Mr. Norbury."

"I am not one to be trifled with, Mr. Layton, I do assure you," was the fierce rejoinder. "By whatever disgraceful trick you have obtained a passage by this ship——"

"You will keep a civil tongue in your head, or you will leave my cabin," interrupted a voice Edith did *not* know. Sharp, stern, and incisive, it seemed to cut the other's speech as with a knife. "You may bully your clerks in Leadenhall-street, Mr. Norbury, and you may bully your niggers in Hindostan, but you will not bully me. Let that be understood between us, if you please, if we are to speak together at all." There was silence for a moment or two, and then, as if some gesture of conciliation had been made by his adversary, the young man resumed in his ordinary voice, "As for my presence here, I might be well content to refer you to the captain for its cause; but, not to be discourteous, I will say at once that I am in Government employment on special service."

"I thought you were a barrister."

"Just so; my mission is a professional one."

"Your practice is so extensive that it extends to India?"

"It may do so, though there are circumstances which may compel me to disembark at the Cape."

"In other words, you intend to dog the footsteps of my niece wherever she goes?"

Then came the short, sharp voice again.

"Be so kind as to remember what I have just said. I will endure no impertinence from any man."

"Impertinence! Surely it is pertinent enough that I should make inquiries of your intentions with regard to

a young lady of whom I am the sole guardian and the uncle."

"A little more than kin and less than kind," was the dry reply, "Yes, you have authority over her it is certain, for you have pushed it to its utmost limits. You have none, however, over me. I am here on my own business."

"That is a—an evasion. If she were not on board the *Ganges* you would never have taken passage in her."

"You have no right to discuss motive. I have no objection, however, to acknowledge that so far you are correct. Miss Edith Norbury has promised to be my wife."

"And I have absolutely forbidden her to be so."

"Nay, that is beyond your powers. You may have forbidden her to marry me within a certain period, after which she becomes her own mistress. It is a mere matter of time."

"And in the mean while you do not think it dishonourable to persuade her to set my authority at defiance and to arrange with you a scheme—whether a modest and maidenly one is the question——"

"Stop, sir!" thundered the other. "Your opinion upon that matter, valuable as it doubtless would be, when one considers the purity of its source, is uncalled for. Your niece, I may say at once, until she saw me just now at the breakfast table, was no more aware than yourself of my presence on board the *Ganges*."

Mr. Norbury gave a grunt of sullen acquiescence. He had probably already come to the conclusion that his niece's emotion on beholding her lover could hardly have been feigned; but it was not in his nature when his mask was off, as it was at present, to acknowledge anything graciously.

"Whether she was aware of it or not," he said, "you will gain nothing by your audacity, sir, while the object

—the innocent object, as you would have me believe—of your persecution will suffer for it. I shall keep my niece in the strictest seclusion throughout the voyage.”

There was a pause, which the listener’s imagination filled up aright: the menace had strained the leash in which Layton had held his temper to its utmost limit.

“You had best not threaten me, Mr. Norbury,” he replied steadily, “and still less her, or I shall have to speak some very plain truths to you.”

“I fear no truth that you or any other man can speak, sir. It is you who, if you knew the truth regarding my niece, would have cause for regret. You are not playing for so high a stake as you imagine, sir. It is true that up to this time I have objected to your suit mainly on the ground of inequality of position. I wished to put the matter in its least offensive form. You smile incredulously, but, on my honour, what I am about to state is the simple fact. Under no circumstances, I admit, would I have sanctioned your engagement; the step you have taken in thrusting your undesired presence upon us here was not necessary to make me resolute upon that point; but, since you have chosen to do so, it may save you more labour in vain to inform you that rumour has much overstated my niece’s fortune.”

“As to that, sir, her fortune is no attraction to me; but I am quite aware, or at all events have a shrewd suspicion, that it is not what it was when it first came into your hands.”

There was a crash of a chair thrown violently to the ground by the sudden rising of the sitter.

“What! Do you dare to accuse me of misappropriation of her property?”

“I accuse you of nothing. Like yourself, I have no desire to be offensive. Let us suppose there has been a fall in the value of the securities you held in trust for her. Under such circumstances it occurs to you that, to

avoid—well, I will not say unpleasant inquiries, but—grumblings, it would be better that her husband should not be a man of business, certainly not a lawyer like myself. Upon the whole it strikes you as a good plan to take her out to India; in the first place to get rid of me, in the second to get her married to somebody else—not necessarily a nabob—I acquit you of any intention of disposing of her to the highest bidder—but to some one who will be satisfied as to money matters with the word of a gentleman and a man of honour.”

“Pray go on, sir. It is fortunate for you that there is no witness here.”

“It is fortunate for one of us, no doubt, Mr. Norbury. As we are quite alone, however, it is possible to suggest to you that under the circumstances, from your own point of view, I may not be so bad a husband for your niece after all.”

“I see. After having made the most libellous and infamous charges which it is possible for you to invent, you are taking their proof for granted in order that you may compound a felony.”

“That is very neatly put. My suggestion, I admit, is quite open to that interpretation. If I had not looked at the matter all round I should be strongly inclined to take that very view of it myself. But I am thinking solely of what is best to be done to ensure the happiness of your niece. Under any circumstances, I fear I should never get her to prosecute you. Motives and feelings into which you are utterly unable to enter, and for which, I confess, in this particular case I myself have but little sympathy, will plead for you to gain your cause. As her husband, it is true, I could compel the law to take its course, but I should put no such compulsion upon her. I shall tell her the truth. Yes, though I would gladly spare her what I know would give her unspeakable pain, I cannot keep her in ignorance of what has happened. I

cannot be a party to your misbehaviour even for her sake ; but I give you my word that, unless at her own instigation, I will take no steps to right her or to punish her wrong-doer. All this, however, on condition that you lay the whole extent of your malversations before her and me, and consent to our immediate marriage."

"A very pretty bargain for a gentleman and a barrister-at-law to propose, upon my soul!" cried the other, in a voice that, hoarse with fear and rage, endeavoured to simulate contempt.

"No, Mr. Norbury, it is not pretty. It is a very ugly bargain, I admit, and the uglier the more we contemplate it. But upon the whole, and looking, I repeat, to your niece's interests only, one may say of it, though bad, that bad's the best."

There was again a pause, longer than those which had preceded it. Edith's ear was straining for her uncle's reply. The proposition of her lover had commended itself to her without any drawbacks. Let Mr. Norbury keep her money, if he had really been so wicked as to take it; should he but consent to their marriage she would forgive him freely. It had not given her much pain, as Layton had supposed it would have done, to learn that she had been robbed of her property by the very hand that should have protected it. It was not like the revelation of a baseness in one whom we have reposed confidence, much less loved. All respect for her uncle had long died within her. Nothing remained but a certain sentimental regard for the authority which had been delegated to him. One would have thought that under the circumstances *that*, too, would have died, since it was plain that the authority in question had, as it were, been obtained under false pretences, that is, upon the understanding that the delegate had been a just and honest man. Yet it was not so. Our habits of thought are not like the garments which we readily exchange for others as the temperature dictates.

This man was still her uncle and her guardian, and his consent to her lover's proposal, if not so absolutely essential as it had seemed some hours ago, was a matter at least most expedient and desirable. Moreover, though she was almost certain that Layton's accusations—for such of course they were, whatever thin disguise he had thrown over them—were well grounded, she was not quite sure of it; and Mr. Norbury's long-delayed rejoinder enlarged the chink of doubt.

"If I have let you say your say with unchecked tongue, Mr. Layton," he presently replied in quiet, resolute tones, "it was only thoroughly to understand the nature of the man with whom I had to deal. You have shown yourself as venomous as you are unprincipled. I despise your insinuations and defy you; and I will take such measures, be assured, as will make all your pains and plans to thrust yourself upon my niece's society on board this ship unprofitable."

"And why not afterwards?" was the contemptuous reply. "Why was there any need to bring her here at all, when the law would have protected her at home? When a young lady of fortune is in danger of persecution from an 'adventurer,' as you have been pleased to term me, there is a very certain way of putting her out of reach. Why did you not make your niece a ward in Chancery? I will tell you—because, knowing what you had done, and suspecting that others knew it, you did not dare invoke the law."

"That is enough, sir; I have done with you. If you persist in your infamous pursuit of my ward the consequences will be on your own head. I am not one to threaten in vain. When I meet an adder I avoid it if I can; but if I cannot avoid it——"

"Just so, admitting for the sake of argument that I am invertebrate," interrupted Layton, scornfully, as the other hesitated, "what then?"

"Why, then I set my heel upon it!"

There was a contemptuous laugh, and then the cabin door slammed; the interview between these two unflinching antagonists was over

CHAPTER VII.

THE THIEF.

UPON the whole, though it troubled her exceedingly, it was an advantage to Edith to have overheard that terrible talk. One of the things that gentlewomen (for the women of the lower ranks know it, alas! only too well) can never understand is, that men of their own class can be absolute scoundrels. Even men who do not know the world are apt to believe that what are called the criminal classes are separated by some almost impassable gulf from the members of their own society and acquaintance. Save as regards the actual commission of crime, this is by no means the case. There are many gentlemen of fashion, and still more of good commercial position, who have all the materials for criminality in their dispositions, only, fortunately for them, the temptation is very rarely sufficient to make them overstep the line of actual delinquency. The hard employer, the mean millionaire, and the unprincipled rake are in many cases as ripe for Newgate, and much more deserving of it, than the rascal in rags who steals; it is only because it is their interest that they are apparently ranged on the side of honesty. We probably meet every day on equal footing, and exchange pleasant words of greeting, with men who are quite capable of murder if the thing was highly advantageous to them, and could be done without risk. Of the desperate wickedness of some human hearts, the ordinary easy-going folks, who fortunately form the majority of us, have, I am satisfied, no idea. They cannot understand how a gentleman in

broadcloth can be a ruffian, or an educated person on a level with the inhuman cur who skins cats alive, not from the lust of greed, but from that worst lust of all, the love of cruelty. Only now and then, in moments of unguarded talk, do we catch lurid gleams of the real nature of such men, but the baleful fires are there under the smooth clay. Women never see the least glimpse of them. "I am quite sure he could never do such a thing," would be their calm rejoinder to any imputation of gross baseness (so long as it was not in connection with their own sex) made against any man of their own acquaintance; you might as well try to persuade them that he was a black man.

Even the information Edith had gathered from Layton's accusations (which she now believed to be well founded) did not convince her, as it would have convinced a man, that her uncle was a scoundrel. Her kinship with him, nay, even her father's trust in him, misplaced as she felt it to have been, fought against such utter condemnation. She pictured him as reckless, and even unscrupulous, but hardly as having robbed her; or, perhaps, she did even think that, but with the slight store that one of her age and sex almost always does put upon mere money when it is her own, she minimized the crime till it was hardly more than an indiscretion. What gave her a far worse opinion of her uncle, and put her much more on her guard against him, was the threat expressed in his parting speech to her lover, "When I meet an adder I avoid it if I can; if not, I set my foot upon it."

The tone in which those words were delivered still rang in her ears, and she felt that they meant mischief. Being what she was, she had a hesitation in saying to herself, "He will stick at nothing—nothing," but that was the tendency of her thought. So far, then, she was advantaged by what she had heard, for to be forewarned is to be forearmed. Though her fears fell far short of what they would have been had she understood the unscrupulous

nature of the man with whom she had to deal, they made her look forward to her first meeting with her uncle with a shudder. She had, it is true, been absolved by her lover from all complicity in his scheme for becoming the companion of her voyage. But, knowing what had passed between the two men, she could understand Mr. Norbury's feelings towards her would be far more hostile than they had hitherto been. It was a great relief to her, therefore, when, in place of her uncle, whom she had expected, she presently saw Aunt Sophia making her devious way towards her on the arm of the doctor.

"I've persuaded your aunt to come up on deck and get a breath of fresh air," explained Mr. Doyle, as he led his companion to a chair contiguous to Edith's; "there's nothing like trying your sea-legs early."

As in the case of the legs of childhood, it is possible, however, to try them too early, and poor Aunt Sophia staggered into her chair as though those limbs had not only been bandy, but boneless.

"Oh, my dear," she moaned complainingly, "what a dreadful thing is shipboard! If I could have foreseen one-tenth of the miseries it was to entail upon me, no persuasions of your Uncle Ernest should have induced me to accompany them. If I must have gone to India I would rather have ridden on the top of an omnibus the whole way, by the overland route."

Wretched as she was, Edith could not but smile at the alternative of travel thus presented to her. "But my dear aunt, you will soon get over the motion, bad as the pitching and tossing seems to you at first."

"It is not that," put in Aunt Sophia, with unwonted irritation, "though I shall certainly never get used to having my heels higher than my head every other moment. It is the sinking, the terrible down, down, down-dropping, which is so detestable. It seems a perfect miracle how we ever come up again, and I almost wish we didn't,"

"My poor dear," said Elith, coaxingly. "She will laugh at all that, will she not, Mr. Doyle, in a few days?"

"She'll think it one of the finest jokes that ever was cracked," corroborated the gentleman appealed to.

"Cracked!" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, turning upon the astonished surgeon with angry vehemence! "you must be cracked yourself to see any joke in such horrors. It is not only physical pain that they engender, they poison the whole moral system. I protest I don't care sixpence what becomes, not only of myself, but of all that used to be near and dear to me. They have had just the same effect upon my brother Ernest. He looks as though he could eat one, and throws his words at one as if they were bones to a dog."

The surgeon had strolled away at the mention of Uncle Ernest, rightly concluding that if Aunt Sophia had not been 'put out' by her sufferings, she would not have been so frank in his presence in alluding to her respected relative. Still, though she knew they were alone together, Edith shrank from speaking to her companion of her guardian.

"I am afraid you have had a most unpleasant night's rest," she said, evasively.

"Rest? People don't rest at sea—at least, not people who are—— Oh, good gracious! now we are going down again. My dear, I seem hardly to have had one wink of sleep."

"I should have come and seen how you were this morning, had I been permitted to do so, but I was told that you did not wish to be disturbed."

"My dear, I never expressed any such wish. I was not in a condition to harbour a wish. I must say Eleanor was very kind, and looked in upon me more than once during the night."

Aunt Sophia's tone was significant. It implied some astonishment at the kind behaviour of her elder niece, and also some suggestion of neglect on the part of the younger.

"But your cabin door was locked, for I tried the handle,

though very softly so as not to disturb you, before I went to bed," observed Edith.

"Oh, I don't complain of you, my dear, far from it; and, moreover, you could have done nothing for me, even if you had come; but as for the door being locked, our three cabins all communicate with one another, you know; the panel of each partition slips back. Did not the stewardess tell you that?"

Edith had looked up with amazement. It was clear to her now how her cabin had been entered during the night, and only too clear whose was the hand that had deprived her of her precious treasures. It must have been that of her cousin Eleanor.

"No, I did not know it," she answered with effort, "or I should have certainly come to you as my cousin did."

"I am sure you would; but, as I have said, it would have been no good. 'When lovely woman stoops to folly'—no, of course I don't mean that, but when one is so mad as to go to sea, there is no remedy for the consequences. No one can help one, and one can't help oneself. Nelly meant to be very careful, no doubt, but, coming in and out to look after me, she made so much noise that she woke me out of the little sleep I had; indeed, but that she assured me to the contrary, I thought that she had slid back the partition and gone in to you. How pale you look, Edith! I hope you are not feeling as I do. Everything seems to swim about except the ship; there it is, sinking again! oh dear, oh dear!"

Edith, who felt that Aunt Sophia's sufferings must have been severe, indeed, to have engendered this complaining and almost bitter spirit in one ordinarily so full of the milk of human kindness, strove her best to be sympathetic; but the sense of her cousin's treachery, the conviction that she was playing into her father's hands in so unworthy a manner, depressed her exceedingly. If her lover had not come to her rescue, how terrible would have been her

position between two foes who should have been her nearest friends, and with none but poor Aunt Sophia to lean upon. What a pair of unscrupulous enemies, too, dear Charley had made for himself by his loving scheme !

"There are worse things than sea-sickness, dear Aunt Sophia," she murmured, in the anguish of her soul.

"That I deny," was the irritable rejoinder. "If you only knew what it was you wouldn't say so. In my case it produces simple prostration ; and because I'm quiet and don't complain, you think little of it. But wait till you see your uncle. He is naturally, perhaps, rather a bilious subject, and its effect on him is really most deplorable. Talk of temper ! There is the less cause for him, too, for whereas we poor women are among strangers, he has unexpectedly found an old friend on board."

"A friend ?" said Edith, scarcely able to believe her ears, for her mind at once reverted to her lover. "Did he say a friend ?"

"Yes, he did ; though indeed I rather wondered at it, considering the difference in their positions ; the third mate, it seems, is a former acquaintance of his. I came upon them talking in the cuddy. 'I find Mr. Bates is an old friend of mine,' he said, as if in explanation of their familiarity. Then he said, 'We are discussing old times,' as much as to say my company was not wanted, and in a tone that was sharp enough to cut one's nose off. If it had not been for dear Dr. Doyle—though I don't see the use of a doctor on board ship, unless he can cure sea-sickness—I could never have climbed what they call the companion-ladder, because I suppose no one can get up it alone. It's hard," added Aunt Sophia, with a little snuffle, "to be so snapped at, when one feels on the verge of the grave."

"Uncle Ernest is very angry," explained Edith, "because he has discovered that Charley is on board."

"Charley ? Mr. Layton ? Good heavens !" The good lady's excitement was so intense that for the moment she

forgot her woes. "Has he hid himself in the hold, as a stowaway, or what?"

"Of course not," returned Edith, with dignity; "he is a passenger, which he has as much right to be as you or I!"

"Oh, my dear, pray don't misunderstand me. I'm sure I wish he had the ship to himself, as far as that goes. He should have my place, I'm sure, and welcome. Only, how very amazing it is that he should be here. I call it tremendous! It didn't astonish *you* so much, I suppose," she added with simplicity.

"Yes, it did; I knew nothing whatever of his intention."

"Your Uncle Ernest will never believe that," said Aunt Sophia gravely. "Oh dear, oh dear! no wonder he looked black. This is beyond everything I have ever apprehended. It is like being taken by pirates."

"I am much obliged to you for the compliment."

"No, no, I don't mean that it is a parallel case, of course, except in the unexpectedness of the calamity—the shock."

"I don't think it is a calamity at all."

"Oh, my goodness, but what will your uncle think? Mr. Layton on board the *Ganges*! Well, thank Heaven for one thing, we shall now get out at the Cape."

"Then Mr. Layton will get out too."

"By all means," gasped Aunt Sophia, with a sigh of relief; "then perhaps we shall all return by caravan or something. I had rather come back on a camel through the desert than risk another voyage. Well, what you have told me explains, if it does not excuse, your uncle's behaviour, which is some comfort."

"I am sorry my uncle is so angry," replied Edith, with more indifference perhaps than she really felt; "but, as I have said, Mr. Layton has a perfect right to be here; and even if he had not I had no hand in bringing him."

Aunt Sophia shook her head in a manner to imply that it was a very serious business in any case.

"There is Eleanor, too," she murmured presently as if to herself, "she will be in a pretty state."

"What has Eleanor to do with it? What right has my cousin to meddle with my affairs?" inquired Edith. The thought of how she had already meddled with them, and so treacherously and inexcusably, brought the colour into her cheeks.

"Quite true, my dear, quite true," answered the other hurriedly; "but you know what Eleanor is, and how violent in her prejudices."

"And how unscrupulous in acting on them," put in Edith, bitterly. "Yes, I know all that."

"For mercy's sake, my darling, hush!" cried Aunt Sophia, in terrified tones. "She isn't ill a bit" (this with a grudging emphasis), "and may be up-stairs, or whatever they call it, at any moment."

"Let her come!" cried Edith, giving reins to her passionate indignation; "let her come. I never was afraid of thieves."

CHAPTER VIII.

WITH HER MASK OFF.

THAT last observation of Edith's, "I never was afraid of thieves," was, of course, a dark saying to Aunt Sophia. She knew, indeed, that her niece did not suffer from those nervous terrors which seized herself of nights with respect to possible depredators, but she did not understand her allusion to the fact on the present occasion. It was obvious by her look of wild surprise that she had not the least reason for supposing it could have any reference to Eleanor; yet the appearance of her elder niece at that moment seemed to suggest some sort of association with it, and filled her with vague alarm.

"You look very white and shivery still, Aunt Sophia," remarked the new-comer as she took her seat; then, with

a nod and a cold smile addressed to her cousin, she added, "You, Edith, on the contrary, it seems, may be congratulated upon being a good sailor."

Eleanor was never demonstrative, and the relations between the cousins of late had been such that no endearment, even of the conventional kind, had ever passed between them; but at meeting and parting it had hitherto been their custom to shake hands. It seemed to Edith that, in dispensing with this ceremony, Eleanor was either making a declaration of war, or that, believing the other suspected her of having stolen her treasured letters, she was unwilling to run the risk of having her advances rejected. Her tone, too, had something of tentativeness in it which corroborated this latter view.

"I have suffered nothing from the motion of the ship," returned Edith dryly. There was a significance in her words which implied that she had, however, something else to complain of, but Eleanor made haste to ignore it.

"You have not had much experience, however, as yet," she replied; "this is nothing to what we shall meet with round the Cape and afterwards."

It was a characteristic speech in any case, but especially so if Edith's surmise was correct, since the ill-nature of her cousin's disposition thus showed itself notwithstanding it was her obvious interest to be conciliatory, or at all events to avoid quarrel.

"If it's worse than this I shall die," said Aunt Sophia, confidently. The remark perhaps was not solely made with reference to the sea voyage. The sense of being between her two nieces at daggers drawn, of one of whom at least she stood in deadly fear, gave intensity to her foreboding.

Eleanor laughed in her short, hard way. "We get used to everything in time; the sooner we find out that our best plan is to bear it the better."

To Edith's excited mind, burning with the sense of her

wrong, and the presence of her wrong-doer, this too seemed less of a general observation than it would have appeared to an outsider. She read a menace to herself between its lines. The instinct was strong within her to tax her cousin with her perfidy, and to defy her utmost malice, backed as it was by her father's power, but she restrained herself for her aunt's sake. It was not fair to place that timid and inoffensive lady in such a position that she must needs take sides with one of her two relatives, and that in all probability the side she would rather not have taken. There was a long and painful silence. Then, as though satisfied with her victory, Eleanor began to speak of ordinary matters, and, among other things, to discuss with her aunt—for Edith said little or nothing—matters of the ship. The captain she pronounced to be an impertinent sort of a person, who presumed on his position. She had reason to believe, she said, that it was Mr. Norbury's intention to make him "know his place."

"Really?" put in Aunt Sophia; the vision of the skipper in his uniform and sword was before her eyes, and he seemed too tremendous a personage to be thus subjugated, even by her doughty brother.

"Certainly," said Eleanor, tartly, "indeed I am inclined to believe, for I just saw papa take the captain into his cabin, that he is at this moment giving him a setting down."

Edith had a shrewd idea that the interview had a near connection with her own affairs, but it was plain that Eleanor entertained no such suspicion. "Captain Head," she added, with an almost imperceptible toss of her head, "does not quite seem to understand who we are." She would rather have said, so as to exclude her cousin from all participation in his dignity, "who papa is," but that would have been to ignore her own importance.

"Mr. Marston and Mr. Redmayne are well enough," she went on, "and I will say for Mr. Bates that he is particularly respectful, and seems to appreciate our position."

"And what nice little midshipmen they are," said Aunt Sophia, "at least from what one saw of them last night; though I dare say it was their uniform that set them off so."

"I did not notice them; they are hardly officers at all," observed Eleanor, contemptuously.

"They are certainly officers," said Edith, confidently. Her antagonism was fairly roused.

"They can be disrated and flogged," replied her cousin, as though she would have liked to see it done.

"How shocking!" murmured Aunt Sophia, with a shudder. "Rather than anything of that kind should take place I would get out and walk—that is, be drowned."

"You would not be asked; it would be a matter of discipline," observed her niece severely.

Here came up to them, with a polite salute, one of the proposed victims to outraged maritime law, a 'midshipmite.' He was a lad of fifteen, tall for his age, but rather delicate-looking for a sailor boy. He had brown curly hair, blue eyes, and teeth like snow. He looked like a beautiful page—but not one of those pages who have buttons. Though by nature 'cheeky' enough and full of mischief, his manners when, as at present, he was on his best behaviour, were excellent. In his braiding of blue and gold he looked, every inch of him, a duodecimo gentleman.

"Mr. Marston has sent me to offer you this rug, ladies, as the morning is somewhat cold."

But now a difficulty arose. When he had received his orders from the first mate there had been but two ladies on deck; there were now three, which was one more than the rug could accommodate. As Aunt Sophia and Edith had thanked him instantaneously and with some effusion, while Eleanor had only nodded as if in acknowledgment of what was her due, it was not surprising that he paid his attentions to the two former, while the latter was for the moment literally "left out in the cold." "I will get you

another rug directly," he said to her politely, and then proceeded to place the wrap round the other two ladies, taking particular care and perhaps unnecessary time in tucking it up round Edith, who, it must be confessed, rewarded him with her sweetest smile. This brought a blush into his youthful cheek, which the conversation of the midshipmen's mess had long since ceased to evoke. It was perhaps his first essay as a squire of dames.

"And what is your name, young gentleman?" inquired Eleanor, in a patronizing tone. His pretence at being grown up was very offensive to her; she felt it was her duty to "sit upon him" and thereby reduce him to his proper dimensions.

"My name is Lewis Conolly."

"And how old are you?"

The boy's face flushed crimson; his pride was wounded at being interrogated like a schoolboy, and in the presence of others. At the same time, there was a light in his eye that told of mischief.

"I am in my sixteenth year," he answered, with the simplicity and meekness of a child. "How old are you?"

Eleanor answered nothing, but the colour in her cheeks became even yet more unwholesome, as though its pastiness had gone sour.

"Mr. Bates," she exclaimed. The third mate, who was leaning on the taffrail at some distance, came up at once. "This young gentleman has been impertinent to me."

"Indeed." The dark forbidding face grew sympathetically grave. "What did he say?"

"I should think there was no need to go into details," she answered haughtily. "I say again he has been impertinent."

"Go up to the masthead, sir, and stay there until I call you down," cried the officer, glaring fiercely at the boy.

Master Lewis Conolly looked him straight in the face, giving him quite an angelic smile in exchange for his scowl,

saluted (he was full of salutations, the politest little monkey on board the ship), and retired in the direction indicated. In a few seconds they beheld him climbing the rigging, not like a cat, as midshipmen are figured, by any means, but with the utmost deliberation.

"Oh, Eleanor, how *could* you?" remonstrated Aunt Sophia.

"He is a very impertinent young fellow," put in Mr. Bates, "and wants a tight hand. To cool his heels up yonder for a couple of hours or so will do him all the good in the world."

"I call it most infamous and cowardly," cried Edith suddenly, with vehement indignation.

"Of me, madam?" answered the officer, turning upon her with a very ugly smile.

"No, sir, not of you—you have been merely unjust—but of the person who caused you to commit such an act of tyranny."

"My cousin Edith unhappily knows nothing of discipline," explained Eleanor, in apologetic tones. "She forgets that her own case is an exceptional one, and thinks that every one else should be spoilt and have their own way."

Of this taunt Edith took no notice, and contented herself with observing very resolutely, "I shall lay the case before the captain."

Mr. Bates glanced at Eleanor inquiringly. His look seemed to say, "Will she really have the pluck to do that? If so, the matter will become serious, and the burthen will be on your shoulders."

Eleanor, on her part, was entertaining somewhat similar reflections. She wished to have the boy punished, but if the affair was to be investigated his crime would have to be stated, which might not only seem insignificant in itself, but was calculated to make her appear ridiculous.

"I have no desire to make a fuss about a trifle," she

said. Her tone was ungracious and reluctant enough, but the officer took it as cancelling his sentence.

"Come down, you boy," he shouted.

Master Lewis Conolly detached one hand from the shrouds, saluted, and descended, with the same deliberation of movement as he had gone up.

"Come here, sir," said Mr. Bates. He obeyed like an angel, but one who nevertheless was not provided with wings.

"Thanks to this lady, sir," continued the officer, indicating Eleanor, "you are pardoned this time."

Master Lewis Conolly saluted again, and turning his blue eyes gratefully on Edith, replied, "Thank you madam," and retired.

The third mate also went his way, leaving the three ladies in even a more embarrassing position as regarded their relations to one another than he had found them. If silence had before been possible, to one of them at least it had now become unendurable. Eleanor Norbury's nature was one of those that cannot accept defeat with grace, and which persists in a bad cause with the same pertinacity as though it were a good one.

"You are doing, what you can, Edith," she said in a voice trembling with passion, "to induce others to resist authority, as you have resisted it yourself. It will be bad for them, and sooner or later, I warn you, it will be bad for you."

"Are you commissioned by any one to threaten me?" inquired Edith, dryly.

"Of course not to threaten you; but it is certainly my father's wish that you should understand that he is getting tired of a policy of conciliation."

"He will not succeed in his object any better by a policy of theft."

"Of what?" cried Eleanor, rising to her feet with a suppressed scream of rage.

The instant the accusing words had passed her lips, Edith perceived their double meaning. She had referred to the robbery of her letters only, but the recollection of her lover's talk with Mr. Norbury at once recurred to her. She beheld in her imagination an indignant daughter resenting a charge of dishonesty against her father.

"I am referring," said Edith, in calmer tones than she would have thought it possible to use in such a matter, "to the abstraction of my private letters from my cabin last night. From a conversation I had with my uncle yesterday evening I am inclined to think that they were purloined at his instigation."

"Your suspicion is quite correct; I took them myself under his authority," replied Eleanor, boldly; they are now in his possession."

"Then he is a receiver of stolen goods."

"You dare to say that? Then I am a thief, I suppose?"

"Most certainly, upon your own confession."

"Oh dear! oh dear!" murmured Aunt Sophia, "pirates themselves could be no worse than this."

The observation might well have been taken in its literal sense, if theft on board ship is an act of piracy, but it was evident that the speaker only intended it metaphorically, and as descriptive of the social imbroglio.

"I am not sorry, Edith," continued her cousin after a pause, which, to judge by the movement of her throat, was occupied in swallowing, "that you have used this plainness of speech; your insolence and audacity convince me that you understand your position. It is just as well too that you, Aunt Sophia, should understand it. My father's patience with his niece and ward is exhausted. Since fair means—I mean since persuasion—with her has utterly failed, he is fully resolved to exert his authority. The day of disobedience is over, as she will find."

A suspicion long existent in Edith's mind, but never

entertained—always loyally, up to this time, put aside as groundless and unworthy—suddenly became conviction.

“You have read Mr. Layton’s letters, Eleanor,” she exclaimed.

Eleanor turned ghastly pale. “I have not,” she muttered between her teeth.

“That is a falsehood ; and because they were written out of the fulness of his heart to me, and not to you, you are full of jealousy and hatred.”

“Oh dear ! oh dear !” moaned Aunt Sophia.

The gallant *Ganges* had made a dip more deep than usual, but it was not to that she referred, but to the social wreck that was taking place about her. Everything seemed going overboard, and she without a spar to cling to.

“You will repent having said that, you—you hussy, as long as you live,” gasped Eleanor, almost speechless with fury. “Do not think you are going to have your way any more. Since your spirit cannot be bent, it must be broken, and you need look to me for neither help nor mercy.”

“To you !” echoed Edith, with cold scorn. “I must be destitute of help indeed before I look to such a source for succour.”

“You speak as if you were still in London, with troops of friends purchased by the rumour of your wealth. But you are now bound for a land where legitimate authority is something more than a mere sham ; and, in the mean time, on board this ship, you will find you are in firm hands.”

The speaker suddenly grew dumb, and into her face there came a look of rancorous disappointment, such as her cousin rightly judged could have been evoked by one cause only.

Edith’s back was to the companion-ladder, so that she could not see who was approaching them, but in her kinswoman’s face she recognized the new-comer as in a mirror.

“I am not, you see, so friendless as you supposed, Cousin Eleanor,” she answered quietly. “Perhaps I ought to have told you that Mr. Layton was on board.”

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTAIN HEAD TO THE RESCUE.

IN the records of battle, we sometimes come across the graphic line, "The enemy broke and fled." This is generally the result of sudden panic. If the phrase can be applied to a single individual, it exactly fitted the behaviour of Eleanor Norbury when she beheld Charles Layton standing before her. He had made no hostile demonstration—quite the contrary; he had lifted his hat with great politeness; but she rose at once, and snatching up her skirts in her hand, as if to avoid the contamination of his touch, she rushed away, as Aunt Sophia would have expressed it, 'down-stairs.' The latter stood her ground—or rather sat where she was—from sheer incapacity to do otherwise. For the last quarter of an hour she had been consumed with that emotion which ladies, in the marriage service, are particularly required to avoid, 'amazement.' It had seemed to her that there was no longer room in her soul for any new surprise. But she was now fairly paralyzed with astonishment. For a moment it did not occur to her that Mr. Layton must be a passenger on board the *Ganges*, like herself; he appeared to have literally dropped from the clouds. It was not a case of *nec Deus intersit*. No intervention short of this, she felt, could have saved Edith, and it had happened in the very nick of time. She knew Eleanor well, and therefore knew what good cause Edith had to fear her. She had recognized the fact that evil days indeed were in store for her favourite niece, and now that such a champion had so opportunely stepped in, her whole heart was stirred with joy. But it was a 'fearful joy.' While she welcomed the deliverer, she trembled at his audacity. Though her sympathies were altogether with Edith, she had by no means the courage of her opinions. Now that she had got over her first shock of

wonder, she would, despite the perils of locomotion, have essayed to follow Eleanor, quite as much from fear of her anger, as from an instinct that the two lovers would wish to be left alone, had not Mr. Layton, with a grave smile, motioned her to remain.

"Pray do not run away from us," he said. "Edith and I have no secrets from you, Miss Norbury."

A judicious remark enough, but one that seemed to poor Aunt Sophia, as indeed it was, not a little compromising. It would be a great point gained, as Layton felt, if he could get her to declare herself on Edith's side; but actual partisanship was beyond her powers; she had not, in fact, the pluck for it. The consciousness of her own weakness could be read in her troubled face.

"Oh, Mr. Layton, how *could* you?" she murmured reproachfully. "And yet, though I know it's very wrong, I can't help feeling glad."

"Of course you are glad that Edith has found a protector. None knows better than yourself how much she stood in need of one."

"That is very true," said Aunt Sophia, without suspecting the extent of her own admission. "But what can you do even now that you are here? It is useless to attempt to withstand my brother; he will stir up everybody on board the ship against you, even that dear old captain."

"But not that dear young midshipman," put in Edith, parenthetically. Her good spirits had returned to her with amazing quickness now that her lover was by her side.

"My dear child, what is the good of a midshipman? How can he help you up at the mast-head?"

"I have reason to suppose that Mr. Norbury is now speaking with the captain," said Layton.

"Good heavens! What will be done to you?" exclaimed Aunt Sophia. "He can't put you in irons, can he?"

"I don't think he can," answered the young man, smil-

ing. "Mr. Norbury will suggest, no doubt, some measure of that kind, but it will hardly be received with favour. Your brother's manner is a little too dictatorial, I fancy, to suit Captain Head."

"You do not know my brother, Mr. Layton," returned Aunt Sophia, in a frightened whisper. "He never forgives where he has been thwarted as you have thwarted him. If the poor captain ventures to take your part, he will lose his ship."

At this prediction the young barrister laughed aloud. "Captain Head can take care of himself, I think, even against Mr. Norbury; nor am I at all alarmed upon my own account. But dear Edith stands in sore need of a friend of her own sex. If you desert her, Miss Norbury, she will be isolated indeed; if you go over to the enemy——"

"No, no," interrupted Aunt Sophia, clasping her trembling hands; "I will never do that. But pray, pray, do not ask me to take sides with her openly. If I promised to do it, Eleanor would make me break my promise within the first five minutes. You don't know what Eleanor is, Mr. Layton, when she gets you alone."

"That is true," said Mr. Layton, with great gravity. Not so much as a twinkle of his eye betrayed that there had been a time when he might have informed himself upon that point. "I would not put you in a painful position with respect to your own belongings for the world, but remember that Edith also is your own flesh and blood."

"I love her dearly," sighed Aunt Sophia.

"I believe you do; but I wish to put you on your guard, lest your respect for her should be impaired by calumny. If I have done anything amiss, which I deny, in coming on board this ship, the fault is wholly mine; nor had she the least knowledge of my intention. She is as innocent and simple as others whom we know of are unscrupulous and designing; whenever you hear anything said against her, I

do not ask you to contradict it, but only to say to yourself, 'This is a lie.' Give her all the comfort you can, and leave her defence to me. If anything should happen to me (Hush, dear"—this to Edith, whose hand he was holding in his own—"you must let me speak to your aunt now I have the chance—it may never occur again)—I say, dear Miss Norbury, if anything should happen to me, remember that this girl, your dead brother's child, has no friend on earth but you. You must advise her for the best from your own heart, and not from the promptings of others."

There was a half-articulate "I will" from Aunt Sophia. She was sobbing. The picture thus drawn of her niece's bereavement, and of the responsibility thereby imposed upon herself, had been too much for her.

"I was sure that I could trust to your kind heart," said the young man, gratefully. "I will not detain you longer, lest your remaining here should be construed into a more active alliance with us."

He rose, and was about to offer her his arm, when his eye caught that of the young midshipman, who was watching the little group at some distance.

"Mr. Conolly," he said, "will you be kind enough to escort this lady to the cuddy?"

The young gentleman was at his side in a moment, with an earnest "Nothing will give me greater pleasure."

"No, sir, not that lady—this one."

The midshipman had offered his arm to Edith, and now transferred it to Aunt Sophia, quite politely, but with perhaps not the same alacrity that he had originally shown.

"My dear boy, your arm is not a bit of use. You must let me hold on to you as I can," cried the unhappy lady. They staggered away together to the companion ladder. She had begun by taking his shoulder with one hand, to steady herself; the last thing they saw of her she was

clasping his neck with both her arms, and nothing was to be seen of Master Lewis Conolly at all.

The two young people looked at one another and laughed involuntarily, which was the best thing they could have done, for it relieved the tension of their minds. Up to this moment, it must be remembered, not a word of explanation had passed between them, and even now, with the sailors passing to and fro about them, they could not be said to be alone.

"You are not sorry to see me, love? You are not angry that I have taken you by surprise?" murmured the young fellow. The voice that had been so bold in defending another had the accents of a dove now that he was defending himself.

"Sorry! Oh no, not sorry, nor yet angry, Charley; but why did you not tell me yesterday of what you proposed to do? Then that parting would not have been so terrible; I should have been spared twelve hours of a misery that was almost despair."

"I was afraid to do so, Edie, lest your face should have revealed our secret. If your uncle had known of my intention to be your fellow-passenger, he would have forfeited his passage-money rather than have permitted it."

"That is true, indeed," acknowledged Edith; "but you have offended him past all pardon."

"I do not want his pardon." For one moment he was tempted to add, "though he may want yours;" but he resisted the impulse. He would not pain the girl by telling her of her uncle's dishonesty, though the revelation would have been so advantageous to him. Edith, on her part, had good grounds for guessing what was on the tip of his tongue, and the motive which prevented him from giving it utterance. Thus, which rarely happens in this world, he reaped the benefit of his chivalry.

"You dear!" ejaculated the young lady. A tribute to

his delicacy of feeling which her lover took for a mere natural outburst of affection.

"I wish there were not so many people about," returned her lover yearningly. "Even at night I suppose they always have a watch on deck, confound them!"

"I hope so, indeed," said Edith, with an affectation of ignorance of his meaning that was simply bewitching. "You don't want to be run down, I suppose."

"I don't want *you* to run me down," he replied comically, "though since I have had the pleasure of your uncle's acquaintance I am getting quite used to the operation. Perhaps I ought to tell you, by the bye, at once, that he and I have had a talk together. He has given me that piece of his mind which he has so long promised me. It is better that you should know the facts so far—he and I are now at daggers drawn."

"Do not say that," she answered, with a little shiver. "It is sufficient to tell me that you have quarrelled."

"That circumstance does not affect me in the least. Upon the whole, I am glad that he and I now thoroughly understand one another. My only fear is that it may affect you. It is possible that your uncle may persuade the captain to allow him to use compulsion with you, to make you a prisoner in your cabin; but I don't think he will. I am not without some influence at my back, and I have still my own appeal to make to him. If it succeeds, or if the captain is the man I take him to be, nothing can prevent our enjoying one another's society on board the *Ganges*. We shall have weeks and weeks of uninterrupted happiness before us. That is a great gain, in any case. When we get to India, our position will doubtless be more difficult, but by no means hopeless. In the mean time, my darling love, we shall be together. Hush! That is the captain's voice in your uncle's cabin, which is next to mine; they are at it together hammer and tongs."

They had been at it together some time. Hitherto,

however, they had been prudently talking in hushed tones, while the conversation on deck had prevented Edith's attention being drawn to it, as on the former occasion.

"As to shutting up your niece, sir, in her cabin, on board my ship," cried the captain, angrily, "I should as soon think of giving you permission to put her in the hold. To be frank with you, I cannot conceive any one calling himself a gentleman proposing such a measure."

Mr. Norbury's rejoinder was inaudible, but it probably took the form of a threat, for the captain's voice pealed out again louder than ever.

"You may make what representations of my conduct you please, sir, to whom you please. I know my duty, which for one thing demands that I should afford protection to my lady passengers, and not to play into the hands of any domestic tyrant. If you want to bully your women folk, then stay ashore, sir."

There were some inarticulate sounds in reply, words doubtless smothered in rage, which acted on the other as flax on fire.

"Repent it! No, sir, I shall not repent it, whatever comes of it. And as for insolence, let me tell you that as captain of this ship I will brook such a term from no man. The love affair between your niece and this young gentleman is, it is true, none of my business, but if I hear of any compulsion being used towards her, there's a parson on board, and, as sure as my name's Henry Head, he shall marry those young people in the cuddy."

Then the cabin door was closed with a bang, as it had been closed before, and Mr. Norbury was left alone with such cogitations as can be conjectured.

"How terrible it all is, Charley," murmured Edith in a whisper. "Of what dreadful scenes have I become the unhappy cause!"

"The innocent but not the unhappy cause, my darling. Why should you be unhappy? We shall now be at liberty

to do as we please, which will be charming. There can be only one thing better, that your uncle should try compulsion, in which case we shall be married in the cuddy."

CHAPTER X.

LAND.

HUMAN affairs in general can be more or less calculated upon. The annuity companies look forward with well-grounded philosophy to the decease of their fellow-creatures within a reasonable time. But, in the abstract, matters are wholly different. The individual knows not what a day may bring forth, nor even one pregnant hour. To him "nothing comes with certainty except the unexpected."

Within a space of time that seemed too short for their occurrence, circumstances had effected a complete *bouleversement* in the fortunes of Edith Norbury. The weary voyage that she had looked forward to with such apprehension had been suddenly transformed into a pleasure trip. The end of it, of course, was to be proportionally dreaded; but that is the case with all human happiness. The most long-lived love contains in it from the first the germs of 'parting,' but the sense of it happily does not haunt us throughout our lives. A few hours of her lover's society had hitherto been all that fate had vouchsafed her, and even those had been trammelled with hindrances and prohibitions. Now there were whole weeks before her of unrestricted enjoyment. "Let us gather our roses while we may," was the motto of these happy young people; and upon the whole it was a wise one. If the quarrel between Edith and her people had been less complete, her position would have been far less enviable. The remark of the Eastern executioner when racking his mother-in-law, "Our relations are getting a little strained," did not apply to her case, for all connection between herself and them

was cut off, as it were, "at the main," and for the present, at least, whatever future evil might come of it, this was the more convenient, since she lay under no necessity to conciliate them.

Her uncle and Eleanor, being unable to make a prisoner of her, as they would certainly have done if they could, put her 'in Coventry,' and a very agreeable residential spot she found it. She had now and then a stolen interview with Aunt Sophia, who was, however, unable to tell her what was going on in the enemy's camp. She was herself 'suspect,' or, to borrow a golden phrase, coined in the Reign of Terror, "suspected of being suspect," and (worse than boycotted) was at once denied the confidence of her own people, and forbidden to hold intercourse with their rebellious relative. With sea-sickness superadded—for she never got over that from first to last—this poor lady's lot was certainly a most deplorable one. It may be said that she deserved it for not throwing in her lot where her sympathies were already enlisted, but heroism is not so easy to practise as to applaud. She had always been in her brother's hands, into which, as Mr. Layton suspected, her property, if she had had any, had already passed, and was as unfitted by nature as by circumstances to take a line of her own in any direction. Such persons deserve the pity of their fellow-creatures rather than their blame, yet they seldom get it, especially, as in Aunt Sophia's case, when they are of stout proportions. The misleading proverb, "Laugh and grow fat," robs them of half the sympathy that is their due. She therefore stood, or rather sat, apart, while the other inmates of the *Ganges* ranged themselves on one side or the other in the family quarrel.

The two lovers, thanks to Edith's gracious manners and good looks, had a great majority with them. Captain Head, as we know, had early declared for them. Mr. Marston, though believing he held himself straight as a poplar in the calm atmosphere of duty, was swayed towards

them in spite of himself. Mr. Redmayne was an open partisan of theirs, and in his wild enthusiastic way suggested that Mr. Norbury and his daughter should be put out at the Cape and left there. Mr. Ainsworth, as a man of peace, endeavoured to effect a reconciliation; but finding his efforts resented by Mr. Norbury with much contempt, joined Edith's banner. "I cannot fight for you," he said to Mr. Layton; "my cloth forbids it; but on the shortest notice I will marry you in the cuddy."

The captain's threat had got about, and, like all jokes on shipboard, had been received with rapture. But it was in the midshipmen's berth that Edith's cause was embraced with the greatest ardour. Master Lewis Conolly was understood to hold himself in readiness to meet Mr. Norbury in mortal combat with any weapon that gentleman might choose against his modest dirk; Masters Arthur North and Frederic Taylor confined themselves to challenging (in imagination) the tyrant to fisticuffs with one arm tied behind them. The sailors, too, almost to a man, were for the young lady; they toasted her charms in grog in the forecabin, and compared her favourably with the figure-head of their vessel, which they had hitherto believed to be of unrivalled beauty. There are not many things with which a lady can propitiate the sailors on board the ship on which she is a passenger, but, on the other hand, if she is young and beautiful she is looked upon by the more impressionable among them as a queen is on shore, and a gracious smile and a kind word from her go a long way; of these Edith was naturally lavish. Moreover, when it came to subscriptions for the entertainment of Neptune and Company on the day when they crossed the line, she gave with a free hand, which no doubt contrasted favourably with the conduct of her cousin, who, like Mr. John Gilpin, though not indeed bent on pleasure, "had a frugal mind."

Edith's popularity was not, however, universal. It was

generally understood that Mr. Norbury was a person of great influence with "John Company," and could do a great deal for a man if he had a mind that way. Even the sturdy British sailor is not always blind to his own private advantage, and has been known to make lovely woman herself subordinate to it; but the few who were opposed to the young couple were for the most part hangers-on of Mr. Bates, the third mate, who, as we have seen, had from the first entered into an alliance with his former patron. What the relations between himself and Mr. Norbury had previously been none quite understood, but it was supposed that he had been in that gentleman's employment, where he had committed defalcations. From this charitable view it will be justly concluded that this officer was not a *persona grata* on board the *Ganges*, and indeed he was very thoroughly hated by almost the entire ship's company. The only exception, save among the common sailors, among whom he had a small following of his own, was Gideon Ghorst, the interpreter, a Hindoo who had lost his caste, and in the process acquired many things unknown (let us hope) to my readers, and among them a smattering of some unconsidered Eastern tongues, including Malay. His limited acquaintance with English probably prevented him from understanding the nature of the language which the third mate occasionally used to him in common with the rest of his companions in the fore-castle, while his nature was so gentle that he was ready to curry favour with anybody for an allowance of rum.

Notwithstanding that sense of being a general favourite, which is so agreeable to us all till we come to learn its real value at a pinch, and the almost constant companionship of her lover, Edith Norbury was by no means easy in her mind. Though she had no cause to love her people, but, on the contrary, greatly to mistrust and fear them, their total estrangement from her was distressing. In this respect perhaps more than any other, a woman's nature is

unlike a man's, that home ties, even when they take the form of fetters, are essential to her.

That Mr. Norbury and his daughter should have taken to 'the sulks' was a matter of great congratulation to Charley, who hailed the excommunication which they had pronounced upon Edith and himself as though it had been a "Bless you, my children!" uttered by Mr. Norbury, as 'heavy father,' with uplifted hands. Even if they had been his own flesh and blood their enmity would probably not have caused him the least inconvenience. Nay, had Mr. Norbury been not only his own uncle, but possessed of all the cardinal virtues instead of being, as he shrewdly suspected, a great rogue, and had yet behaved harshly and unjustly towards himself, he would probably have been well content to quarrel with him. "If he be not fair to me," he would have said to himself, "what care I for his 'warmth' and reputation for integrity in the city?" It is the privilege and perquisite of a man to shake himself free of the closest bonds of relationship when they gall him. But Edith, though innocent of its existence, secretly bewailed the gulf that yawned so widely between her and her belongings. Her disposition prompted her to live at peace with all her fellow-creatures, but "especially with those of her own household." She more than once had confided her regrets on this matter to Aunt Sophia, who had sympathized with them to the uttermost. That excellent woman, through long habit of submission (for she had really by nature a good backbone of her own), had become so dependent as to absolutely demand some sort of lattice-work to cling to—"Miss Virginia Creeper" Mr. Layton used to call her, with reference to this parasitic tendency, though indeed she was no parasite)—otherwise, in spite of flouts and repulses, she would not have striven as she did to effect a reconciliation between those she feared and those she loved. Hitherto her endeavours had met with no success, but a time came when, somewhat unex-

pectedly, her brother showed signs of yielding. It was the evening before the day on which it was expected that they would enter Simon's Bay, where the *Ganges* was to stop for a day or two, and every one who could get leave was going on shore.

"We shall sight land to-morrow, Sophia," said Mr. Norbury, with unwonted affability, "and Eleanor and I propose a little jaunt as far as Cape Town. It would give us pleasure to take you with us, for a day or two ashore would, I am sure, be a great relief to you, after all you have suffered; but then, you see, there is Edith, whom we can hardly leave alone on shipboard."

It struck Aunt Sophia for the moment that they had left her alone a good deal already, but that rebellious idea was characteristically dismissed from her mind as soon as it had entered it; it was of course a different thing, she reflected, to avoid her society, and to make it impossible by their absence for her to communicate with them at all. Though she had been forbidden to hold converse with her niece in general terms, occasional intercourse with her had been winked at (the fact being that Mr. Norbury had used his sister as an unconscious spy on Edith's actions), and it was only natural they should be unwilling to leave her without a female companion.

"Of course, I must stay with Edith," answered Aunt Sophia, with a little sigh, for the prospect of even a day or two upon *terra firma*, where, save under very unexceptional circumstances, there were no 'sinkings,' and where when the wind blows it only affects your garments, and not your legs, was very tempting to her.

"Unless," put in Mr. Norbury, "Edith would condescend to make one of our party."

"I am sure if you or Eleanor would ask her she would be only too pleased," said Aunt Sophia, eagerly.

"I shall certainly not ask her," observed Eleanor sharply. "If my father chooses to put her in possession of his wishes

on the subject, and to have them disregarded, is another matter, which only concerns himself and his self-respect."

Mr. Norbury glanced at his daughter in a very unpaternal manner—indeed, much as he was wont to glance at his niece when he met her, as necessity compelled him to do at meals and on deck, with Mr. Charles Layton in her close vicinity.

"Hold your tongue, miss, and keep your opinion till it's wanted," was his austere rejoinder. "No, Sophia, after what has passed between Edith and myself, it is impossible that I could run the risk of any rejection of my advances. I feel, indeed, that the present state of our relations with one another is deplorable, and should be glad to put an end to it, though that of course is an admission which it would be impossible to make to her. The only manner in which it can be arranged is through an intermediary. You can tell her if you like that, as the ship is calling at Simon's Town for fresh meat, and will stay there a couple of days, we propose to drive over to Cape Town. If she will join us, no reference will be made to the subject of Mr. Layton, but it must be understood, of course, that that person does not intrude himself on our society.

This message, though couched in much more gracious terms—as Mr. Norbury no doubt took it for granted it would be—was duly conveyed by Aunt Sophia to Edith, who in her turn laid the proposition before her lover.

"You will do, my dear," he said, "exactly as you please about it; but if your uncle thinks he is going to give me the slip by keeping you at Cape Town and letting the *Ganges* sail without you he is greatly mistaken."

"I am quite sure he has no plan of that kind in view," put in Aunt Sophia, "for we are only to take luggage sufficient for a couple of days. You smile as if that might be a blind, Mr. Layton; but you don't know Eleanor. Nothing, I am quite sure, would ever induce her to be permanently parted from her wardrobe."

“Still, if Edith goes to Cape Town, so shall I,” observed the young man, decisively. “I shall not in any way interfere with your family party; but I only trust Mr. Norbury as far as I see him, and therefore I shall not let him out of my sight.”

Edith was willing enough to enter the door of reconciliation thus placed, as it were, ajar for her, while, upon the other hand, her apprehensions were calmed by her lover's precautions. Peace, or rather what was after all little better than an armed neutrality, was, metaphorically, sealed and signed that night between her and her relatives in the cuddy. If it was not so good as being married there, it was, she tried to feel, better than that ignoring of each other's existence which they had been wont to practise. To her sanguine disposition it seemed of happy augury that their subject of conversation—for of course all personal matters were eschewed—was the country they were about so soon to visit, the Cape of Good Hope. Eleanor, though she thought novels ‘frivolous,’ was a great reader of travels, and discoursed of Cape Town and its climate and of the dimensions of Table Mountain with accurate severity. As a Minister ‘puts up’ some member of the House to talk out an unwelcome measure, so her father had enjoined on her to make conversation in order to avoid the intrusion of any embarrassing topic, and—like most reticent persons when they do talk—she talked like a book. It was not very interesting, but a time was coming, though close hidden in the cloud that shrouds our future, wherein Edith was glad to dwell upon it as being at least a memory void of offence.

The captain was to stay on board to superintend matters relating to the provisioning of the ship, but both the first and second mates were to be of Mr. Norbury's party in the Cape waggon the next day. Mr. Bates, on the other hand, was to stay in Simon's Town, where he had English, or, as suggested by his shipmates, more likely native

relations. He was well acquainted with the place, and informed Mr. Layton where a horse could be hired to go to Cape Town. His manner of so doing was almost polite, and indeed the near approach of land seemed to have a more or less conciliating effect on everybody. It is probable that nobody but a pirate, or that *Teredo navalis*, the ship's bore, from which no passenger vessel can hope to be free, really relishes 'blue water'—the being out of sight of his natural element—for any length of time.

When Aunt Sophia awoke in the morning she found herself for the first time for six weeks in a state of equilibrium; the *Ganges* had ceased its eternal game of pitch and toss, and was floating at anchor on Simon's Bay like a lake cygnet which had never so much as heard of 'the art of sinking.' Never, as it seemed to her, had she seen such an enchanting prospect as presented itself from the deck: the waveless sea, the safe and solid hills, with the sun shining full upon them from a cloudless sky; the little town, which, mellowed by distance, seemed a place to live and die in. Everything on board seemed to speak of holiday, and every one to be doing their level best to enjoy it. Even Mr. Bates had a grin on his face as he came up to congratulate her on the fair weather, and to point out the objects of interest—the fountain on the hill where the clothes were being washed and dried, and the admiral's abode, which stood out from its humbler neighbours surmounted by its flag. It seemed a lifetime since she had seen a house, or any hill that was not a wave.

All that were bound for Cape Town, with the exception of Mr. Layton, were despatched in the first boat; he would not embarrass Edith by his companionship, but at the same time was resolved that no trick should be played him; if he could not actually keep them in sight he could follow them at a sufficiently short interval. A smaller boat, with Mr. Bates and some seamen with leave of absence for the day, was to start immediately afterwards

with him. The former gentleman had already, as he had informed him, secured him a riding-horse by messenger, and was giving him directions as to the road—which, however, it was almost impossible he could miss—while the boat was getting ready.

“You will have the whole of to-morrow in Cape Town to yourself,” he was saying, “for you can do the return journey easily in two hours, and we shall not sail till evening.”

At this moment one Brownrigg, a creature of Mr. Bates, who had of late been under punishment for intoxication, came up to the third mate and asked permission to go on shore. There was no particular privacy in the application, which, indeed, was made in an unnecessarily loud and somewhat impertinent tone, but Mr. Layton mechanically moved away from them a pace or two. As he did so he heard in a low but distinct whisper the words “Don’t go !” There was such a significant hush and caution in them that he repressed the exclamation of surprise that rose to his lips, and only looked about him. No one was very near him save Mr. Bates and the sailor, but leaning over the taffrail at a little distance was Master Lewis Conolly. Layton at once assumed the same position, for, though the telephone had not yet been invented, he was aware of the carrying powers which a piece of wood like the taffrail of a vessel possesses as regards sound. He leant over it, and looked down into the water as the midshipman was doing, but without taking any notice of him. “Well, you may leave, my man,” said Mr. Bates, in a voice that was certainly intended to be heard, “but if you go near the liquor store understand that it will be the worse for you.”

“Don’t go,” murmured the warning voice again, more earnestly than before, “your life is in danger.”

“Now, Mr. Layton, the boat is ready, if you are,” cried the mate.

“One moment, Mr. Bates. I have forgotten to take

any money," exclaimed the barrister. He ran down to his cabin, apparently to procure what is said to make the mare to go, and which he would undoubtedly require for his equestrian trip; but it seemed to be his custom, as among the natives of the East, to carry two purses; he placed one of them in one pocket and one in the other, and they were pretty heavy ones, considering the short time he proposed to be away. The men in the boat were holding on to the ship's side in waiting for him when he returned to the deck, and Master Conolly, standing with his back to them, regarded him with a scared, reproachful look.

"All right, Mr. Bates, I'm ready for you now," said Mr. Layton, with a significant look at the lad intended to reassure him. Though he seemed to understand it, it had not, however, that effect. Leaning on the taffrail he watched Mr. Layton as he took his place in the stern, with an expression of unutterable woe.

"Why, is not Mr. Conolly coming with us?" exclaimed Layton, with a sudden impulse; "you will give him leave, Mr. Bates, I'm sure?"

"I cannot, sir; he is the midshipman on duty," returned the mate, curtly. "Shove off, men," and away they went. As they did so it seemed to Layton that Master Conolly's eyes travelled from his face to that of the sailor Brownrigg with a look of intense distrust and apprehension, as though the "Don't go, your life is in danger," had been supplemented by that parting glance with "and from that man."

CHAPTER XI.

NUMBER TWO.

BROWNRIGG was a turbulent, sullen-looking fellow enough, as Layton admitted to himself as he watched the man stretch to his oar; but he had no cause to dread his enmity. There was only one man, indeed, on board the

Ganges of whom he could say that; but *his* hostility, as he felt, was so bitter that it might well have made any one to whom his patronage extended his enemy. He knew, indeed, of no relation of the sort existing between Mr. Norbury and the man in question; but Mr. Bates was an ally of Mr. Norbury's, and this fellow was one of his henchmen. It had not escaped Layton's observation that he had given the man leave to go on shore, in spite of his recent misbehaviour; whereas indulgence and forgiveness were not usually among Mr. Bates's weaknesses in dealing with his subordinates.

The new-born civility of the third mate towards himself was also a little suspicious. He had understood from other sources that it was really difficult to obtain a mare or horse in Simon's Town, and yet Mr. Bates had secured one for him, notwithstanding that no less than six had been requisitioned for the waggon that conveyed the rest of the party. The similarity of the case with that of the horse of Troy, which the Trojans omitted to "look in the mouth," or elsewhere, because it was a gift horse, struck him very forcibly. Perhaps this animal would turn out to be a buck-jumper; but even so, he had been accustomed to ride from boyhood, and feared nothing that horse could do to him. When they reached shore the boat was beached, and every man partook himself to such enjoyment as was to his taste and the little town afforded for him.

At its unambitious inn, 'The Clarence,' to which Mr. Bates himself conveyed him, he found his promised steed, already saddled and in waiting for him. It did not look at all like a buck-jumper, nor in truth a jumper of any kind; but he saw no reason why it should not carry him for the twenty miles or so that lay between him and Cape Town. A Hottentot or two, with the appearance of having breakfasted *à la fourchette*, and very largely, were hanging about the yard. One of them offered to run beside Layton's horse and show him the way to Cape Town

—a feat that, for one with such a paunch, seemed absolutely incredible, though the landlord assured him it could be accomplished; but the young barrister declined his services. The road indeed, as he had been informed, was not a good one; but as there was no other he could hardly miss it, and in a few minutes he was on his way.

The first ten miles between Simon's Bay and Cape Town, though no doubt they have their charms for those who travel it fresh from the heaving deep, are very barren and uninteresting. At the date of Mr. Layton's acquaintance with it the road was hardly recognizable as such, especially where some stream from the mountains intersected its sandy track with its deep channel; but as its wheel-marks showed where the waggon had preceded him he had no difficulty in finding his way. His progress was, however, slow, for it was difficult to rouse his steed to a canter, and he arrived at the hotel some time after his predecessors, who had already lunched, and were seeing the local lions. In this matter he was more fortunate than he knew, since his friends had already been so thoroughly put to the question as regarded home news by all the English sojourners at the hotel that he himself almost escaped that fiery ordeal.

There are few things more pathetic—and more subversive, by the way, of the idea that home is wherever we ourselves happen to be—than the eager inquiries put to a new arrival from the old country by colonists (of the first generation, at least). "Can you tell me, sir," entreated an old gentleman who came upon Layton—looking at Table Mountain with an air of interest that at once convinced him that he was a visitor, whereas he was merely wondering whether his beloved Edith had been provided with a quiet and sure-footed steed for that inevitable expedition—"can you be so very good as to tell me"—and the tears seemed near his eyes as he spoke—"what horse has won the Derby?"

On Table Mountain, Edith seemed to Layton to be safe at least from abduction, which was his chief apprehension on her account, nor could he well follow the party, considering the narrowness of the road, without at one point or another meeting them point blank, which would have been very embarrassing. The attractions of Rondebosch and Wynberg—the Richmonds of Cape Town—and the more intellectual temptations of its magnificent public library, offered themselves to him in vain; his mind was too anxious to admit of such distractions, and indeed he felt always more or less uneasy when he was not hanging about the court-yard, where the Cape waggon, fitted for horses and not for oxen, in which his beloved had arrived, seemed to give him a solid guarantee that she had not been spirited away from him. In this yard he met, more than once, another individual, who also seemed upon the watch, and whose outline had appeared not unfamiliar to him. On the second occasion he recognized him for certain as the Hottentot who had offered to accompany him from Simon's Town, and who had now apparently performed that trip for his own pleasure. Upon claiming acquaintance with him, however, this persevering native declined to admit his own identity; as he denied it in Dutch indeed—a language of course unknown to his interlocutor—this would have gone for little to shake Layton's conviction any way; but, moreover, he was one of those persons who do not forget faces, whether native or foreign. It was certainly the same man, and his unexpected reappearance seemed to Layton to bode no good. His mind was full of apprehension, and at once jumped to the conclusion that this fellow was a spy set to watch his movements on behalf of Mr. Norbury. This reflection did not tend to render his stay in Cape Town more pleasant; there was nothing for it, however, but to remain and carry out his simple programme for the next twenty-four hours.

Wherever Edith and her party went after their return

from Table Mountain, he followed, though at a respectful distance, and the next afternoon, having seen them off on their return journey, he prepared to take the same route. He had not ridden a hundred yards, however, when he found his horse was dead lame, and had to return to the inn for another. How the lameness had come about there was no explanation, the landlord combating the view that it had been the work of the Hottentot on the ground that he was in the employment of the very man at Simon's Town to whom the horse belonged—an argument which only corroborated the suspicion Layton entertained, but which he thought it wiser to keep to himself. As it happened there was no horse procurable for some time, and the one that was at last offered him was a sorry nag even by comparison with its predecessor. He had no choice, however, but to take it, for his time was getting very short, and he well knew the strictness and punctuality with which the captain's orders were executed. Though he had shown himself so well disposed to him it was quite possible if he failed to appear at the landing-place at the appointed hour that the *Ganges* might sail without him. He therefore hustled his Rosinante along as well as he could.

The shades of evening were falling before he had ridden ten miles out from Cape Town, and he found a difficulty in crossing the first ravine or nullah. It was the only one, however, that was wooded on both sides, and he hoped by the help of an early moon to find the rest of the way easily enough. He had got through the water, and was climbing the dip into the road beyond, when he heard something whizzing past his head, and, glancing back, perceived a native in the act of selecting a second spear from quite a sheaf of them. What light there was was fortunately behind his assailant, and threw out the outlines of his figure clearly enough. Layton, thrusting his hand into his pocket, drew forth a pistol and took a snap shot at the most prominent portion of the enemy's frame. Then the

same thing, only worse, happened that occurred to Mr. Dean, the archæologist, in the ballad—

A chunk of old red sandstone hit him in the abdomen,
And he smiled a sickly smile and curled up upon the floor,
And the rest of the proceedings interested him no more.

The Hottentot 'curled up' and fell, throwing his hands into the air as men do when summoned by the Bushranger Death. At the same instant a man with a crape mask over his features rushed out of the scrub by the wayside and struck at Layton with some sharp instrument. The blow fell short, and only severed his rein, and before it could be repeated Layton fired his second pistol point blank in the face of this new assailant, and with the like result. He dropped at his feet like a stone.

It was neither the time nor place to gratify his curiosity as to the identity of his foe. There might be more ruffians where those came from in the nullah, and he had no other weapon with which to repel them; so, striking his spurs into his horse, he galloped on. This, however, was that poor animal's last spurt; before he had gone a mile further he gave in, and neither force nor persuasion could get even a foot pace out of him; he was foundered. Then Layton girded up his loins to run. He was by no means equipped for speed, for, beside his knapsack, which he now transferred from his horse to his own back, he had his pistols to carry. Most persons under these circumstances, since he had no more ammunition, would have discarded them; but Layton was a lawyer, accustomed to consider the weight of evidence, and, on the whole, thought it wiser to retain them. His mind rapidly reviewed the situation. Of the identity of the Hottentot he was convinced, and he had a shrewd suspicion that his ally had been no other than the man Brownrigg; the instrument with which he had been attacked had certainly been a ship's cutlass, which seemed, at all events, to point him out as a sailor; while the warning words and glance of the young

midshipman made his suspicions trebly strong. Now if, as he believed, he had been the proposed victim of a conspiracy, its object—though it had failed in its immediate intent, which had certainly been nothing less than, his murder—would be equally obtained by his detention in the colony in connection with a criminal trial. He resolved, therefore, to say nothing of what had occurred until, at all events, he was well on his way with Edith on board the *Ganges*. The silence of the other two parties concerned in the adventure might be relied upon, and the effect of it as regarded himself would only be to put him on his guard against those foes who were still alive, and whose unscrupulousness was now only too manifest. Upon the whole, this determination did credit to his good sense and discernment. The only thing he wanted—a common thing with men of his profession and too practical turn—was a little moonshine. The dusk had now almost turned to dark, and speed avails nothing, even to the swiftest, in such cases; they may even be running the wrong way. He picked his way with his eyes on the ground, seeking in vain for the wheel-tracks.

Suddenly on the quiet night there broke the thunder of a ship's gun. On the one hand, it was a bad sign, for it showed that Captain Head was getting very impatient; on the other, it was a good sign-post, for it pointed out to him the direction in which to go. It seemed to him, as he started off again at full speed, that he should never forget that moment, nor could experience another so pregnant with perils and anxieties. If he did not forget it, however, it was not because it was never to find its parallel.

Presently the hills that had limited his horizon opened out; the full moon swam forth in splendour, and he beheld the great bay, with the *Ganges* on its bosom, and in the foreground the boat's crew with their oars in the water, and the coxswain standing up in the stern searching the land for his belated passenger.

There were other eyes on board the ship itself, that were employed, and even more anxiously, on the same quest. The party from Cape Town had themselves arrived on board somewhat behind their time, and found the captain in a fume. He had been consulting the seaman's oracle, the barometer, and it had counselled flight. In spite of the quiet look of things, the wind was rising, and promised to be no mere capful; on the other hand, it was a sou'wester, and favourable to the ship's course. Under these circumstances, to be kept hanging about in Simon's Bay for a single passenger was not to be endured by a commander with a keen sense of duty. Mr. Layton was a great friend of his, but there are limits even to personal friendship; and if the young man imagined that because he had a regard for him he would keep the *Ganges* waiting while he finished a game of billiards in Cape Town, he would find himself dashedly mistaken.

"Hang the fellow! why don't he come?" exclaimed the captain, irascibly.

"Can't say, sir," said Mr. Bates, who had himself come aboard with exemplary punctuality, even before his leave of absence had expired. "I suppose he is amusing himself somewhere."

"I'll amuse him, and be dashed to him! Fire a gun, Mr. Bates."

In the hour of duty (and anger) one is apt to forget matters, save the one immediately in hand. The captain did not remember that the third mate and Layton were not on very good terms, or notice that the explanation he had given of that gentleman's delay was not exactly one that would have been offered by a peacemaker.

Edith was sitting by herself in an obscure corner of the deck, racked by anxiety and apprehension. She had passed a wretched couple of days; for nothing is so distasteful to us, when we do not relish them, as amusements, especially when partaken of in uncongenial company. Once or twice

in Cape Town she had caught sight of Layton going out by himself, and designedly avoiding her. She knew the reason of it, of course, but it had distressed her, and she was longing to tell him so, passionately desirous to make up with loving words for their forced estrangement. The companionship of her relatives had brought her no comfort; she felt that it had effected no genuine reconciliation between them; it had not even been a patching up. Mr. Norbury, indeed, had spoken to her without harshness, and also, as it had seemed to her, with a certain ill-concealed air of triumph, as though her acceptance of his invitation had been the acknowledgment of her defeat; while Eleanor had not troubled herself to hide the confirmed dislike with which she regarded her; and now, though she knew that Charley's intention was to follow them from Cape Town immediately, he had not yet arrived! What could have delayed him? had he lost his way, or met with some accident in one of those horrid nullahs? How lonely and miserable she felt! The report of the gun startled her from these reflections, but filled her with new alarms. In the agitation and confusion of her mind, it seemed to bode ill-tidings.

"What is the matter, Mr. Redmayne?" she inquired hurriedly of the second mate, who happened to be passing.

"It is a signal to the boat," he answered gently. "The captain is getting impatient, that is all."

"But not a signal for its return, surely? He will never let it come back without—that is, he would not leave any passenger behind and sail without him?"

"Well, you see, Miss Norbury, the *Ganges* is not a passenger ship, and indeed, if it were—— But there, I have no doubt Mr. Layton will turn up in time."

The boat could be distinctly seen a few oars' length from the shore; it was motionless save for the rise and fall of the wave, and evidently in waiting for some one. With the midshipman in charge and his passenger, there should

have been eight persons in all, whereas only six could be made out through the glasses.

"Who is in command of that boat, Mr. Bates?" inquired the captain angrily.

"Mr. Lewis Conolly, sir."

"Then why the deuce doesn't he obey orders? Fire another gun, sir."

Before the order could be obeyed a man was seen running down to the shore, the boat was pulled in, and he jumped into it, and it was under way in a moment.

"There are only seven of them yet," muttered the captain. There was more chagrin than passion in his tone this time.

"The boat's crew are all right, sir, I can make out six oars," observed Mr. Bates, complacently.

"Yes, but not Mr. Layton. I call you to witness that I have given him an hour and a half to make up his leeway, and I can do no more."

Mr. Bates gave an assenting salute. He knew his captain well, and understood when a reply was required of him and when not. Mr. Norbury, who had drawn near to them, had not this advantage. He interposed with the praiseworthy intention of strengthening the hands of authority.

"The public service must, of course, be attended to, and is to be preferred to all private considerations."

"I don't want to be told my duty, sir," observed the captain, curtly, "by any dashed interfering landsman that ever was littered."

Mr. Norbury turned very red, but remained silent under this wholly unexpected rebuke, as the boat drew nearer and disclosed the fact beyond all doubt that there was no passenger. Then all traces of annoyance disappeared from his countenance. Mr. Bates and he interchanged a meaning and well-satisfied smile.

Presently the captain moved away to where Edith was

sitting. She had a pair of field-glasses in her hand, with which she was regarding the approaching boat with the utmost intentness.

"My dear Miss Norbury—I mean Miss Edith," he said hurriedly, "I am compelled with very great reluctance to set sail without Mr. Layton; he is doubtless detained by some accident in Cape Town; and rather than you should be left in a state of distress and doubt about him, I will strain my duty, for your sake, so far as to touch there, which I had not intended to do."

Edith rose from her seat and involuntarily held out her hand, which the old fellow gallantly took.

"I cannot express to you, Captain Head," she murmured with tears in her voice, "the obligation under which your kind intention has placed me. I shall never forget it to my dying day, but I am happy to say that any departure from your plans is unnecessary, so far as Mr. Layton is concerned; he is rowing with the rest in the boat—I think you call it Number Two."

"It is certain that he is not Number Two in somebody's estimation," returned the captain, as he took the glass from her. "By gad, you're right, Miss Edith. It seems that the eyes of love are sharper than those of a ship's watch. Mr. Bates, Mr. Layton is in the boat after all, I am glad to see. Who is the man that is missing?"

The answer was a long time coming, and when it did come it was delivered in a most lugubrious tone.

"Well, sir, so far as I can make out, it's John Brownrigg who is left behind."

"A good thing too—the troublesome, drunken dog. Now get the boat on board, and be smart with it; and pipe all hands to make sail."

CHAPTER XII.

PRESENTIMENTS.

It was in accordance with the course of conduct on which Layton had determined that he had declined the seat offered to him by Conolly in the stern of the boat, and volunteered to fill the place vacated by Brownrigg at the oar. It was certain that the midshipman would have been full of questions as to the reason of his friend's delay, which would have been difficult to parry in any case, and the more so since the thread of the matter was already in the young gentleman's hand.

Except that he had left his foundered horse on the same road on which the dead bodies of Brownrigg and the Hottentot would presently be found, there was nothing whatever to connect Layton with their decease, and for the present, at all events, he felt it was the safer plan to keep what had happened to himself.

Hence it was that for a few minutes the hope that he had seen the last of the young lawyer had, as we know, been raised in Mr. Norbury's breast, and the fear of it in that of the captain. To the latter no explanation of his delay was necessary; a few apologetic words about the breaking down of his steed was taken by the good-natured but peppery old sailor as an excuse in full, and in the performance of his nautical duties (which were soon destined to be pressing enough) he would probably have forgotten all about the matter had it not been recalled to his attention. With Edith, on the other hand, concealment was more difficult. Love is not only proverbially importunate, but "keen to track suggestion to its inmost cell." One reads of a "tell-tale glance," but an averted look or a want of promptness in reply equally well tells a man's secret, or at all events reveals that he has one, to the woman who loves him. In ten minutes Layton had put

Edith in possession of his whole story with as great completeness as any unwilling witness he had himself ever turned inside out in a court of justice.

"Great heavens! they meant to murder you!" she exclaimed with horror.

"If they didn't, they 'made believe' in a manner that would have made their fortunes on any stage," returned the young man, dryly. "A spear between one's ear and one's head, and a cutlass aimed at one's cheek-bone——"

"My father's brother—my own flesh and blood!" interrupted the girl in accents of bitter loathing. Then he understood that she had not been referring to the actual perpetrators of the crime in question, but to him who had set them on.

"Nay, nay, we have no right, my dear, to jump to any such conclusion as that," he answered. "It is even possible—though I confess I doubt it—that my money, and not my life, may have been the object of my assailant; but at all events it is unfair to conclude without proof that your uncle had anything to do with the matter."

She shook her head and moaned. "He had, he had. I am sure of it, Charley. I understand now what that air of cruel triumph meant which he wore to-day and yesterday; he thought that he had made sure that you and I would never meet again."

"That is a great deal to gather from a look, I must say, my darling," said Layton remonstratingly; "much as I can read in yours."

In truth he was as fully convinced of Mr. Norbury's complicity in Brownrigg's crime as herself, but his professional instincts prevented him from taking it for granted upon mere suspicion, while he was naturally desirous to spare her what after all *might* be an unnecessary shock to her feelings. Later on in the evening, however, he had, for the first time during the last six-and-twenty hours, an

opportunity of speaking to young Conolly, the result of which settled his views upon the matter.

"Pray tell me, sir, what happened to you on shore?" inquired the boy, earnestly. "I am sure you had some far worse adventure, though you would not speak about it just now, than losing your way or your horse."

"Let us take events in their order, my lad," returned the barrister. "Tell me first how you came to give me that extraordinary warning yesterday morning, when Mr. Bates and Brownrigg were talking together: 'Don't go; your life is in danger.'"

"Because I believed it to be so, Mr. Layton, and from those very men. Of course, I don't like Mr. Bates—nobody does, for that matter—or I should say, perhaps, that I am well aware he does not like me, which prejudices a fellow. Still, I feel well convinced that the third mate is a most unscrupulous scoundrel. He attracts to himself all the ruffians in the ship. Brownrigg, whom, I am thankful to say, we seem to have now got rid of, was about the worst. Do you think Mr. Bates would have given him leave, just out of 'punishment' too as he was, if he had not been a pal of his? The night before last it was my duty to visit the fellow in the black-hole, as you would call it. It is not a pleasant place, but quite good enough for a man who has made a hog of himself, as he had. My impression is that Mr. Bates had given him an extra allowance or two of rum in return for some promise to do you an injury, for, drunk as he was, he kept muttering something about the third mate and yourself which I could not understand. My appearance on my rounds no doubt brought you to his recollection, as having been always a friend to me. 'A deuced fine fellow, that 'long-shore friend of yours,' he murmured menacingly, 'but he'll never come on board the *Ganges* again.' 'Why not?' I inquired, carelessly. 'Why not!' he grunted. 'Because Mr. Bates and I—eh, what are you talking about?'

He meant, of course, what ~~was~~ *he* talking about, and ~~had~~ he not better hold his tongue; and nothing more could I get out of the brute. But, notwithstanding his muddled condition, I could not but think that he referred to some plot that was really being hatched against you, and I determined to let you know of it if I could. I had no chance of seeing you, however, till you came on deck next morning, and you know what occurred then: how Brown-rigg came up to the third mate and asked for leave and got it. That made me more suspicious of him than ever, since, if anything had been already agreed upon between them, to separate from one another was the very thing they would have done as a blind."

"My dear lad, you have mistaken your profession, which should have been the same as my own," said Layton, smiling; "the deduction was most just."

"Indeed, sir, I thought it no laughing matter," returned the boy, evidently a little piqued at his communication being received so lightly. "I did really believe that your life was in danger."

"And you did your best to save it," returned Layton, warmly. "You have behaved like a man, and deserve my fullest confidence as well as gratitude."

Then he told him all that had happened.

"Mr. Bates ought to be hung at the yard-arm," was the midshipman's indignant comment.

"No doubt that is a fate that should overtake more than one of us, if all had their dues," was the dry reply. "But to accuse a ruffian without proof is only to put him on his guard. We must not bark unless we can bite, my lad. I can trust you, I know, in great matters. Can I trust you in comparatively small ones—such as to hold your tongue, for instance?"

Layton felt that he could rely on the lad, but did not think it necessary to enlighten him as to the 'first causes' of what had so nearly proved a catastrophe. It was better

to let him suppose that personal dislike had been the motive of Mr. Bates's intended crime rather than that a price (as he was convinced was the case) had been, as it were, put upon his head by Mr. Norbury. To have hinted at such an atrocity would have made it difficult for the impulsive young midshipman to behave with due respect to that gentleman, whereby he would certainly have made him his enemy. Moreover, he had scruples on Edith's account about disclosing to an outsider, however friendly, the full extent of her uncle's villainy. On the other hand, having received this corroboration of it, he thought there should be no such concealment of the matter from Edith herself, if indeed there remained anything to conceal. After that expression of her own convictions upon the subject there could be no further pain for her in the way of revelation, and he felt that he ought no longer to argue against them. He did not forget the eagerness with which she had recently caught at the prospect of a reconciliation with her unscrupulous relative, and trembled to think that she should ever again commit herself to his tender mercies.

Since the young barrister had returned to the ship, neither Mr. Norbury nor Eleanor had obtruded their attentions upon Edith. In her cousin's case, indeed, this was not surprising, since it had been obvious that what advances had hitherto proceeded from her had been made upon compulsion. Her uncle's avoidance of her, on the other hand, might naturally have resulted from apprehension. Supposing him to be guilty of having prompted the late attempt upon Layton's life, he might well be alarmed lest the other might have escaped from the snare with some knowledge, or at least suspicion, of him who had set the springe. For all Mr. Norbury knew, Brownrigg might not only have failed in his attempt, but have been captured and confessed. Ignorant of the position in which he stood as regarded his enemy, he might well have been afraid to

open his mouth. There was, therefore, no more hindrance than before to Layton's conversing with Edith alone.

A little drawing-room opening from the cuddy, intended for the use of the ladies, but rarely patronized by Eleanor, had been often used by the lovers as a trysting-place in the evening, and they resorted to it now. In the daytime, and in bad weather, a round-house on deck served the same romantic purpose, but it was more subject to incursions; on the present occasion it would have been anything but a spot "for whispering lovers made," for the noise on deck was terrible. The ship was flying before the wind, though with much less of sail than had been set a few hours ago, and the storm was increasing every moment. Even in the snug little drawing-room the two young people found it difficult to hear each other speak, which necessitated their sitting close together on the sofa; while the frequent jolts and jars from the shock of the seas made an attitude which a *chaperone* would have called 'imprudent,' namely, their sitting with their arms round one another's waists, not only prudent but compulsory. Even in this position, so admirably adapted for 'soft nothings,' they had to speak at the very top of their voices—a requirement which, perhaps, never enters into the ideas of lovers who go to sea. This was the more anomalous, as the subject of their talk deeply affected the character of other people; but, on the other hand, there was no fear of eavesdroppers. Not a word could be heard on deck save that which was uttered through the speaking-trumpet; and matters were not much better below.

"I have been talking to our young friend Conolly, my darling, and I am sorry to say he corroborates your view of my adventure with Brownrigg," said Layton. "It was a plot devised between him and Mr. Bates, it seems; and as Mr. Bates has nothing to gain by my departure from this world, I am compelled to look behind him for the real culprit. While there was any doubt you will do me the

justice to say that I gave your uncle the benefit of it; but now I am afraid there is none."

"I am convinced of it," said Edith sadly; "all is over between that man and me. If my money was necessary to him he should have had it for the asking. But that, it seems, is not sufficient. Worse than a highwayman, he does not say to me, 'Your money or your life,' but 'Your life' only."

"Not *yours*, my darling. Even, he, let us hope, would shrink from harming one so innocent as yourself."

"And is not your life my life?" she answered, reproachfully. "If he had taken you from me, what would life have left worth living for? In any case, no ties of blood shall bind me any longer to one who is a murderer in his heart. I say again that I have done with him. Oh, would that I could think that he had done with us!"

"He has done his worst already, my pretty one, and indeed it was bad enough," said Layton reassuringly; "but having missed his aim, he will be very careful not to attempt a second crime. For all he knows, the man Brownrigg may yet be alive to witness against him; or, which would be the same thing in the end, to witness against his confederate. As for me, forewarned is forearmed; and be sure I am safe enough in any case. I shall make it my business before we land in India to collect such evidence against your uncle as, though it may fail to bring his attempt on my life home to him, will be sufficient, I flatter myself, to make him glad to get rid of me on my own terms—which will include the possession of his niece. I have friends in Calcutta who will receive you on landing; and before a month has gone over our heads we shall be man and wife. That is not a prospect which should terrify you, my darling. Why do you tremble? Does the storm affright you?"

"No,*no; it is not that," she answered with a shudder. "I am filled with presentiments of evil."

"That is not like yourself, Edith. A terrible catastrophe indeed has threatened us; but the cloud which held the bolt has passed over our heads, and now all will be sunshine. As soon as the captain is at liberty to attend to anything but his ship, I shall lay the whole case before him in confidence; he is an honest man and will see justice done. Once beneath his ægis no harm can at all events happen to us on board the *Ganges*. Of course I wish that we had not been so scrupulous while we were yet in England. Had we known your uncle for what he is, we should have paid less heed to his authority. But out of evil good has come; his wickedness has driven us into each other's arms."

If the young barrister's eloquence was not that of Demosthenes, he fulfilled that orator's precepts of suiting the action to the word and the word to the action. Cradled in his embrace, and rocked by the storm, Edith lay pale and silent; her eyes regarded him with the tenderest affection, but were full of tears.

"I wish that I could think with you, Charley," she presently said. "I wish that I could feel that our misfortunes were ended, and not, as I fear, only beginning. I dare not even think of such happiness as you have pictured for us, and so soon. It seems more likely, somehow, that one of us should die and leave the other desolate."

"Even then, my darling, we should belong to one another still," answered her lover, smiling. "'Faithful and true, living or dead,' as we used to sing together, you know. Come; you are tired, and your nerves are overstrung to-night; I must see you to your cabin."

It would not have been easy for her to get there unaided by Layton's stalwart arm. The incidents that seem on land to happen to a drunken man, such as that of the floor rising up and striking him, actually do take place at sea during such a storm as was now raging over the Indian Ocean. She lay listening to it for hours; not in terror of

it like her neighbour, Aunt Sophia, but oppressed with the sense of a less material danger. It was a spectre that refused to take a recognizable shape, but she never lost consciousness of its presence. To the dreadful diapason of the storm, the refrain of the old song quoted by her lover seemed constantly to adapt itself :

“Faithful and true, living or dead ;”

but not with the old meaning. Death was no longer that improbable alternative of which we speak with a light heart : its sombre and wide-spread wings seemed to eclipse the sun of hope.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE GALE.

I WAS once the only layman in the company of a large circle of eminent doctors, who were discoursing, with that frankness which is usual to members of that calling when they get together, of the ills to which flesh is heir and of the little which science can do to mitigate them. If Nature were but left to herself, they said, all would be well, or at all events ever so much better. It was the nostrums of the faculty—meaning, of course, those members of the faculty not present—which did half the mischief. I listened with amazement, regretting the amount I had disbursed, to what as it now appeared was such little purpose, in doctors’ fees. I thought of the woman in the Scriptures who had spent half her substance in physicians without being bettered by them, but rather the contrary.

When we adjourned to the smoking-room I found myself by the side of one of the wisest-looking of these gentlemen, whose very face, had I called him in *in extremis*, would have been a comfort to me, I’m sure, before I had listened

to the late general confession; and, encouraged by his affability, I ventured to ask him privately whether the talk of his brethren, in which I noticed he alone had not joined, was to be taken literally or with a grain of salt. "A grain! say rather with a bushel," was his contemptuous reply. "It is all very well to cry 'stinking fish' when there's nobody to hear you" (I bowed in mechanical acknowledgment of this compliment to my personal importance, but he took no notice); "the fact is, however, Nature is by no means the *alma mater* which she is described to be. She is much more like a stepmother. Suppose you are struck down by illness to-morrow, there are plenty of people who will be found to tell you that the best thing to be done is 'to leave things to Nature,' but the simple fact is that what she's after is just this, sir—Nature wants to kill you."

This gentleman's novel view astonished me not less than that of his friends had done; but upon consideration it seems at least the more correct of the two. It is the fashion to speak of Nature as beneficent, but in her sublimest aspects—and it is as fair to take them as illustrative of her character as to judge of man by his actions when he is most deeply moved—she is very far from benignant or even humane. When the elements, for example, throw off the mastery of man, and appear, as one might say, in their true colours, these are not rose-colour, but lurid. Fire becomes the devouring element and water the devastating flood. There is no ruth nor mercy in either of them, nor is any to be found in that which works with both with such demoniacal and malignant force that it has been personified in Holy Writ as the Prince of the Powers of the Air. A storm at sea to those exposed to its frantic violence is far from being the sublime spectacle which it affords to those who behold it from *terra firma*: it is only wind and wave, but it is wind and wave possessed of devils. Shore-going folks have a vague idea that a storm passes from the face of the deep almost like passion from the face of a man, or

that at the most it endures, like a wet day on land, for twelve hours or so. They have no conception of a struggle between giant forces, prolonged it may be for weeks—an unequal contest, during which, though courage may still hold out in that unyielding fort, the soul, physical strength relaxes and fails as the lamp of hope grows dim. It is an experience which must be undergone to be understood. To those who have only seen her fawning at their feet on the silver sands in summer-time, the tender mercies of the cruel sea are unintelligible.

It was the fate of those on board the *Ganges* to experience them to the uttermost. From the evening when she left Simon's Bay the tempest had not ceased to pour its fury upon her tenants for a single hour; day and night seemed almost one to them, engulfed in the green walls of sea, or only lifted out of them to meet the descending clouds.

What occurred in vision to one of the most poetic of poets, and one who was never more at home than when at sea, had become their actual experience—

“’Tis the terror of tempest. The rags of the sail
Are flickering in ribbons before the fierce gale;

The good ship seems splitting: it creaks as a tree
While an earthquake is splintering its root, ere the blast
Of the whirlwind that stripped it of branches is past.

.
The heavy dead hulk
On the living sea rolls, an inanimate bulk.”

It would have been impossible on the fifth day of her troubles for a landsman to have recognized the gallant *Ganges* in her decrepit and shorn condition. On the second day it had become necessary to cut away the mizzen-mast, and on the third the main-mast; and yet the wreck flew before the gale more swiftly far than with all her sails set before a favouring wind. In what part of the Indian Ocean she now was no one on board could tell with certainty. It was only known that she had been driven hundreds of miles out of her course, and was driving still; more than twenty

men had been swept overboard, and there was no time to mourn them; the consciousness of their loss was mainly brought home to the survivors in the increased tax upon their physical energies. There was little sleep for any man and little food. As for the cabin passengers, they got what they could in their outstretched hands from the steward, regular meals being out of the question. What Aunt Sophia thought of the sea now might be conjectured, but she gave no expression to her views, and if she had they would have found no auditor. The yell of the wind drowned all sounds save those which itself made; the roar of the maddened sea, the straining of the ship's timbers, or the bursting of a sail with an explosion like the crack of doom. The horseplay of a storm at sea is like that of our roughs at home—reckless, aimless, and malignant. There was not a lucid interval in all its madness—no lull wherein the watchers, who were no longer, alas! the keepers of the storm fiend, could snatch an hour's repose.

Some days were not, however, so bad as others. Then the three miserable women would crawl up from their stifling cabins to the round-house upon deck to look upon the fate that threatened them, which seemed less horrible than the imagination of it amid the darkness and chaos below. As in the great water-floods on land, the wildest and most savage animals will collect with the tamest upon the knolls and spurs that offer a temporary security, and forget the instincts of tooth and claw in their common peril, so was it with their human congeners on board the *Ganges*. Mr. Norbury and his daughter no longer kept aloof from Edith, and even met Mr. Layton without a scowl. On the other hand, there was no attempt at reconciliation. Considering the short time which in all probability they had to live, it was not perhaps worth their while to make any overtures of friendship; while to confess to having committed a wrong was foreign to their natures. Eleanor would sometimes make room for Edith by her side as she

came staggering in to their common place of shelter, assisted by her lover ; and Mr. Norbury would welcome her with a stony smile. He was not a coward, but his helplessness and want of occupation compelled him to brood upon the past, and perhaps the future, and it is probable that neither of them were cheerful subjects of contemplation. They were folks upon their death-beds whom the doctors had given up. Mr. Norbury had once put the question to the captain, "Do you think there is any hope for us?" and he had replied with significant brevity, "I do not," after which the man of business had placed a padlock on his lips. He had perhaps so much to repent of that he knew not where to begin, or his nature, less reckless than indomitable, made him averse to 'hedge' even on the brink of ruin.

As for Edith, she took her fate for granted without asking. Most of her time was spent with Layton, and in his arms, yet not as earthly lovers. The presentiment that had oppressed her when they left Simon's Bay had now almost been accomplished, and was shared by both of them. They might be united in the world where there was no giving in marriage, but not in this : their faithfulness was to be proved not in life but in death. It was the sense of what became her as a Christian woman that caused her to leave him occasionally to seek the companionship of her relatives ; it gave them the opportunity of making friends with her, and at all events showed them that she, on her part, had no malice or hatred in her heart towards them. At such times Layton, having escorted her to the door of the round-house, would make his way as best he could to some part of the deck that offered comparative shelter, and wait there till she required his services to descend. His presence in the same place would, he was well aware, be not only unacceptable to the others, but would arouse those very feelings of hostility and bitterness which Edith would fain have allayed. So it was on a certain day less tempestuous than

its predecessors, but with no more sun in the sky than in their hearts.

As the wreck—for the ship now hardly deserved a better name—drove before the gale, a mist drove with her, through rents of which could be occasionally seen the great gray waves or dark green hollows which had so long formed their look-out. Aunt Sophia and Edith were alone in the round-house, but it was understood that Mr. Norbury and his daughter were about to join them. Layton, as usual, ensconced himself as best he could under the lee of the weather-bulwark and near the helm. There were two men at the wheel, and Mr. Bates close to them occasionally issuing an order, or a caution, in stentorian tones.

The ship still obeyed her helm, but only on great compulsion and in a half-hearted manner. It was all the helmsmen could do to keep her running before the wind in order to escape the terrific seas that were in chase of her. It was terrible to look at them ; yet they had a fascination for Layton which he could not resist. Each was like a great wall of water which was about to overtake and pass through the ship. When it had gone by, sweeping all that was not fast along with it, it was with a sort of dull amazement that he perceived that she still floated. There was a life-belt hanging over him—the last of some dozen that had been on board. He found himself wondering how it hung there like a lonely leaf in late November which has survived storm and rain, and also why, for such things had long been without their use. He had lost none of his physical powers, but, except when Edith was by, had become strangely apathetic, as men are wont to do who have lived for days face to face with death. Suddenly he heard a cry from Bates, louder than usual, and beheld a mountain of green water close upon them ; the next moment he was drenched, breathless, and blinded. When he came to himself he became conscious that other hands beside his own were clinging to the same ring in the bulk head.

"What has happened, Mr. Bates?"

"We are pooped, the round-house has been swept away," gasped his companion.

"The round-house!" His eyes fell upon the vacant space which it had occupied a moment before. "Great heavens! where are the ladies?"

"Overboard," was the ghastly rejoinder.

Layton snatched at the life-belt, and the next instant had leapt on the taffrail and into the sea.

"The man is mad," murmured the other, but he leant over and sought for him with his eyes nevertheless. As if satisfied for the moment with the ruin it had wrought, the sea had lulled a little, and it was possible to mark the human speck for a moment or two in that ocean of foam. Something happened in that brief space known only to two human beings. Then, with a white face and a terror in his eyes which the strife of the elements had failed to evoke, Mr. Bates made his way below.

As he did so a vision appeared painted out on the mist, and beheld only by the men at the wheel. A great ship without a rag of sail seemed to fly by them, not parallel to the *Ganges*, but at an angle with her. Her masts were standing, and there were men on her deck. It was incomprehensible that she should not only have survived such a gale but have suffered so little. The two spectators looked at one another in horror. "It is the *Flying Dutchman*," exclaimed one. His companion nodded and turned his quid in his cheek.

"Then that will finish us."

The prophecy was about to be fulfilled.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BATES'S NEWS.

It was with some difficulty, notwithstanding his familiarity with the route and his excellent sea-legs, that Mr. Bates found his way to the cuddy. The deck, for reasons of his own, quite unconnected with the state of affairs there, was just now distasteful to him; and besides, he had news to tell somebody. It may seem strange that under such conditions of peril it should have been so. To a landsman, under the same circumstances, the state of the vessel would have been the sole subject of interest, and the only news worth speaking of a change in the weather. But to a sailor, his ship is his home even when she has become a wreck, and life, until she sinks, goes on there for him with its aims and motives much as usual. In times even that look desperate he does not defer things of importance till he gets to dry land and can consider matters, but grasps the skirts of happy chance as they sweep by and looks to the main one.

"Mr. Bates's errand was to Mr. Norbury, at whose cabin door he knocked in a manner in which vehemence and caution were strangely mixed. It opened of course from the cuddy, which was vacant. No meal had been served there for many a day; the broad bare table looked dark and cheerless; the place itself, from which every article of movable furniture had long been removed, or been broken where it stood, most dismal. There was little fear of interruption or of eavesdroppers; but it was necessary to beat at the door with violence to overcome the tumult that reigned everywhere, and as he did so Mr. Bates kept an eye over his shoulder. The door was locked, but that did not necessarily imply that the tenant was within. It was Mr. Norbury's habit to lock his door when he was absent. On the other hand, if elsewhere, where could he be? He was

certainly not on deck, and could not therefore have been a witness to the catastrophe that had just occurred there. "Mr. Norbury," shouted the third mate through the key-hole; then, "Norbury, Norbury."

His voice thus reiterating the other's name in that solitary place had a gruesome sound, like that raised by one who, half superstitious and half sceptical, utters his own name in the dead of night alone, with the idea of rousing his familiar spirit.

"Norbury, Norbury, let me in; I have great and terrible news for you."

"What news?"

Mr. Bates started and turned round, then uttered a shrill cry of terror and staggered against the cabin door. Close behind him, clinging to the table with both hands and peering over it, was Edith Norbury, pale as the ghost he deemed her to be, her long hair streaming down her neck, her eyes fixed on his own with agonized inquiry. "You have terrible news, you say. What is it? My uncle is not in his cabin; he is in the round-house."

The sweat broke out upon Mr. Bates's forehead. If this woman was really alive and was speaking truth, he had been calling on a dead man, and with what a purpose! He had been striving to inform a spirit already in hell (for so the position occurred to him) that the girl whom he hated, and the man whom he feared and had tried to slay, were both swept from his path. The man was certainly gone, but the girl was standing before his own eyes. Gradually the true state of affairs began to dawn upon him, but it was a very different matter to tell it to the ear for which it had been first intended, and to tell it to this girl. A heart that is not to be touched by pity will sometimes be moved by the consciousness of the commission of a wrong. In Edith's presence the man trembled; his remorse for the moment gave his voice the semblance of sympathy.

"If your uncle was in the round-house, Miss Edith, he has perished, for it has been swept away."

"Great heavens! And Eleanor?"

"She has perished with him—I saw her washed overboard with my own eyes."

"It is impossible, it is too horrible!" answered the girl, vehemently. "How could you have seen them perish, when you came down here to speak to my uncle? I heard you calling to him: you said you had terrible news for him."

It would have been difficult even for one who was more accustomed to speak the truth than the third mate to state matters as they had actually occurred. It would have been embarrassing enough to have to say, "When I witnessed the catastrophe which has occurred to your cousin I took her for you: it was the tidings of your death which I was about to communicate to Mr. Norbury," not, as it had seemed, with a superfluity of emotion. But unhappily there was so much more to say.

"I have told you the simple fact, Miss Edith: I saw the round-house swept away with your cousin, but I did not know Mr. Norbury was within it. No, it is useless for you to go on deck." He seized her wrist as she was staggering towards the companion-ladder and detained her by main force. "I will not permit you to do it; it would be dangerous in the last degree. There is no one there save those whom duty compels to be."

"Mr. Layton is there, I know."

"Not *now*."

He uttered the words with an intentional significance, yet without meaning to be brutal; it was easier to hint curtly at what had happened than to explain it in set terms of any kind.

"Not *now*! What, in Heaven's name, do you mean?" she gasped. "Where is he?"

Mr. Bates was silent. It was a question, no doubt, very hard to answer; but to the girl's searching and suspicious

glance there seemed something more than embarrassment in his face.

"What have you done with him?" she exclaimed with a fierce light in her eyes, seizing the officer by his loose sailor neckerchief. "Murderer! murderer! Help! Help!"

A door opened behind them and Aunt Sophia tottered out of her cabin. "Merciful Heaven!" she cried, "what has happened?" Then perceiving Edith engaged in a frantic struggle with she knew not whom, she swelled with her feeble voice the girl's cries for assistance.

Mr. Ainsworth and Lewis Conolly appeared simultaneously—the former from his cabin, the latter flying down the companion-ladder like a ball, but alighting on his feet. At the sight of them Edith released her hold of the third mate.

"What is the matter?" inquired the clergyman anxiously.

"You may well ask!" panted Mr. Bates.

With one hand clinging to the table, Edith pointed to him with the other. "That man is a murderer!" she gasped; "he has murdered my Charley!"

The midshipman flew at his throat like a bull-pup, while Bates struck at him furiously; the paralysis which had seemed to seize him while in Edith's hands disappeared in the case of this new assailant. Mr. Ainsworth threw himself between the two unequal combatants with a vigour wholly unexpected, and separated them by main force.

"Shame upon you, to call yourselves Christian men," he exclaimed reprovingly, "yet thus to fight upon the brink of the grave!—Now, Mr. Bates, explain yourself."

"I have nothing to explain—the matter does not concern me at all," answered the third mate sullenly, "but I had some bad news to tell, and this young lady has confused the bearer of it with its cause."

"That man has murdered my Charley!" reiterated Edith. Her body quivered and trembled as much with excitement as with the rolling and pitching of the ship, but

the outstretched arm with which she denounced her enemy was stiff as steel.

"There must be some mistake, Miss Edith," murmured the clergyman soothingly; "Mr. Layton was alive and well ten minutes ago, when Mr. Conolly and I brought you two ladies from the round-house."

"It is true enough, however, that he is dead," said the third mate curtly. "But as to my having murdered him, as the young lady says, it is she, if anybody, who has done it."

"What does the man mean? he must be mad!" exclaimed Mr. Ainsworth.

"Well, this is how it happened: Mr. Layton and I were near the wheel when the wave came that pooped us. The round-house was swept away, and with it, as we both thought, Miss Edith yonder. Mr. Layton seeing her go overboard (though I suppose it was Miss Eleanor) jumped on to the taffrail and leapt into the sea after her. That's the simple fact, and I don't see how I could have stopped him, or how it was my fault."

"Mr. Bates is right so far, my dear young lady," said the clergyman tenderly. "It behoves us, no matter how heavy may be our bereavement, to be just; if our dear brother has been taken from us, we may be sure if in the realms of bliss his soul could be troubled by anything it would be so by an accusation made on his account against an innocent man."

"What need had I to hurt him," muttered the third mate, "even if I had a wish to do it? I suppose such a sea as this is enough to drown any one without hitting him over the head."

Mr. Ainsworth threw a searching glance on the speaker which seemed to say, "This man doth protest too much," but his attention was suddenly called to Edith, who would have fallen to the ground had not the young midshipman caught her in his arms. The blood had left her face, her eyes were closed, her limbs were rigid.

"Hold her," he cried excitedly, "while I run for Mr. Doyle."

"No," exclaimed Aunt Sophia in an unwonted tone of authority. "Bring her into her cabin and leave her with me."

Her woman's eyes perceived that her niece had only fainted, her woman's heart recognized at once that the presence of any one of whose sympathy the girl was not assured would on her coming to herself be most painful to her; she would be in the lowest depths of distress and despair in any case, and if her grief should not have way it might even be fatal to her. Under Aunt Sophia's guidance Mr. Ainsworth and the young midshipman carried her tenderly into her cabin and placed her upon the narrow bed. It seemed like laying the poor girl's corpse in her coffin.

The third mate remained outside, irresolute and disconcerted. Nothing had turned out as he had expected. There was no need for his remaining in the cuddy, yet he hesitated to go on deck, where his duties called him. Presently the cabin door opened, and the two men came out. Conolly slowly made his way up the companion, without even looking at Mr. Bates. His step had lost its spring, his young heart was heavy within him for Edith's sake.

Mr. Ainsworth addressed the third mate in the tone of a judge who cross-examines a witness: "You say that Mr. Layton jumped overboard? Did you see him afterwards?"

"How could I?" was the sulky response.

"I mean, did you see him sink, sir?"

"Well, no, he had a life-belt on him, but I saw him drown."

"A life-belt! How was that?"

"I suppose he thought that it might keep him up a bit. If he had been a sailor he would have known better: in such a sea it would only prolong his fate."

"Well, you have brought bad news to that innocent girl—news that will wreck her life, if it is Heaven's will that she or any of us should live to remember this day. Let me ask you to make amends for it in some small degree. Do not tell her that Mr. Layton had a life-belt."

"Very good; though there would have been no harm, I should have thought, in her believing that he jumped overboard after her."

"It is not *that*, sir," answered Mr. Ainsworth angrily. "Can you not understand that it was for her, and not for himself, that the brave fellow took that poor precaution? What I am afraid of is that in her ignorance of such matters she might still think that there is hope for him, and not face the miserable fact at once."

"Hope! how can there be hope for him, when I saw him—at least as good as saw him—drown with my own eyes? How could a man live for five minutes in such a turmoil?"

"Of course not—it is impossible," sighed Mr. Ainsworth to himself. "Heaven give her strength to bear her burthen!"

A midshipman looking like a drowned mouse came running down the companion. "You are wanted on deck, Mr. Bates," he cried with more excitement than respect. Then perceiving the clergyman, he added cheerfully, "The clouds are lifting and the gale has abated, sir. There is hope for us still, Mr. Marston thinks."

"Thanks, my lad." Mr. Ainsworth smiled and nodded gravely. "That will be hardly good news to this poor girl. It would be better, perhaps, for her if she never woke to life again. God alone knows, however, what is the best for us."

CHAPTER XV.

THE WRECK.

BETWEEN Nature and human nature there are many analogies. The seasons have in particular been largely drawn upon by poets and divines to illustrate the vicissitudes of our own existence. As the earth has its winter, we are told, so has the human heart, and it will, if it waits long enough, find its spring-time. But Nature can always wait, which man cannot do, and during the process she suffers nothing.

In a drear-nighted December
Too happy, happy tree,
Thy branches ne'er remember
Their green felicity.
The frost cannot undo them,
With its sleety whistle through them,

Nor the cold north wind prevent them from budding at their prime.

But we, alas! in our winter-time do remember, and "a sorrow's crown of sorrow is remembering happier things."

If only we could be torpid till "the cold north winds"—the aching voids, the bitter and fruitless regrets—had blown over, life would be very different from what it is. When some poor woman, delicate and defenceless, but whom Fate, alas! deals no more mercifully with on that account, is suddenly struck down by its brutal hand, and after a little while of unconsciousness wakes to life and her new and painful burden, we call it coming to herself again, whereas, in fact, she is herself no longer. Though life is left to her, the light of it has been taken away, and henceforward she gropes her way in a world that has been made dark to her. It is the usual fashion of mankind to speak of the greatest sorrow that can happen to a woman—the loss of a long-loved husband—as lasting but a year and a day; well would it be for many a widow if this were true. There are thousands who never survive it, and if they

smile, smile only for their children's sake. We know infinitely less of the sorrows of our fellow-creatures than of their pleasures, and are impelled by various motives to ignore them, the meanest and most grovelling being the notion that in underrating human woe we are paying court to that Supreme Being who, for some doubtless wise but inexplicable reason, permits its existence.

As, however, in the administration of the knout in Russia the executioner will sometimes defeat his own object and the law's, by a too brutal stroke, so Fate in its blind fury will sometimes kill outright, or numb, where it has meant to only maim, and this latter mistake it committed in Edith Norbury's case. Days passed away after the fact of her lover's death had been communicated to her before the full capacity for pain returned to her—the shock of the news fell on her like a blow from a bludgeon and stunned her. Now and then she would awake from a sleep which seemed akin to death, and murmur, “Dead, dead!” or sometimes “Drowned, drowned!” and then relapse into unconsciousness.

Aunt Sophia never left her side, and tended her with unremitting gentleness. To her, perhaps, this melancholy occupation was not without its advantages; it prevented her from dwelling on her own troubles, or on the perils which surrounded her. For neither her brother nor her niece Eleanor was it possible that she could have entertained a genuine affection; she had for years loyally shut her eyes to their real character, but circumstances had of late compelled her to behold them, not, indeed, as they really were, but in a very unfavourable light. She was obliged to acknowledge to herself that the one was harsh and hard, and the other malignant. There had been a time when Eleanor had been disposed to regard Charles Layton with something more than favour, and since he had declared his love for another she had done her best to thwart him, and had spoken of him with the most relent-

less and bitter rancour. Still those she had lost were her near and almost only relatives, and Aunt Sophia's was one of those conventional natures with whom the ties of blood count for very much, independently of the worth or merits of her belongings. The shocking and sudden manner of their 'taking off' affected her also extremely, and but for her thoughts being so much monopolized by her unhappy charge, they would naturally have dwelt upon it. The catastrophe which had befallen Mr. Layton, who had always been a favourite of hers, was also most deplorable, though she felt it more deeply upon her niece's account than on her own. Henceforward all the affection of her credulous but honest nature was concentrated upon Edith. As to the danger which threatened them, and to which she had been hitherto keenly sensitive, she lost sight of it in the spectacle of the poor girl's misery. Moreover, though the outlook was still very serious, the gale had at length given signs of weariness, the wind had greatly moderated, and the waves had shrunk to little above their normal size. Such an incident as that which had deprived her of her relatives, and swept off the very place of shelter in which they sat as with a knife, could hardly be imagined as one watched those hurrying but diminished crests.

Strangely enough, Aunt Sophia herself had been the cause of Edith's salvation, if the saving of the poor girl's life could indeed be set down as any benefit. After Layton had left Edith and her aunt in the round-house, Mr. Norbury and Eleanor, though, as it happened, unseen by him, had joined them. Then Aunt Sophia had been seized with sudden faintness, the result of many days' alarm and fatigue, and Edith, with young Conolly's assistance, had got her down into her cabin only a few minutes before the tragedy on deck took place.

The recurrence of such a catastrophe was, as has been said, now no longer to be feared, but the condition of affairs was still full of danger. The *Ganges* was little

better than a wreck. A jury-mast had been set up with a few sails, and she answered wonderfully to her helm; but she laboured heavily; while the rain continued in such volume that it made every one almost as wet and wretched as the seas she had shipped had done before. For the first time since the commencement of the storm, the vessel resumed her proper course, from which she had been driven at great speed for many days. From the chart it appeared that she was hundreds of miles from the nearest land, and, of course, utterly unfit to cope with bad weather. Still, as the midshipman had said, there was now hope—for those to whom life still offered hopes.

On Edith this cheering news had little influence, though she strove to be thankful for the sake of others. If the highest expectations of her companions should be realized and India should be reached in safety, what would that avail her? She would only be landed in a strange country, to which she had always been averse, without a friend save the one that accompanied her, and to whom it would be as distasteful as to herself. The best she had to look forward to—if she could be said to look forward to anything, for, alas, were not all her miserable thoughts centred in the past?—was that her stay there should be as short as possible. A tedious and melancholy return voyage then offered itself, full of wretched associations, and at the end of it a home only in name. The man she loved had left his country for her sake, and, under a mistake that seemed something designed by fate in sheer malignity, had perished in a vain attempt to save another whom he had imagined to be herself. What a waste of love and heroism it seemed! What was the use of valour, and self-sacrifice, and devotion, if such rewards were meted out to them? It was worse than if blind chance had done it; it almost seemed that evil, and not good, was lord of all.

Presently the rain ceased and the sun came out. The white malice of the cruel sea was succeeded by its "count-

less smile." Like some treacherous tyrant who has a good-natured mood and is amazed that his late victims should have any remembrance of his late monstrous cruelties, it seemed to say, "Come, let bygones be bygones; my late trespasses against you have left, I assure you, no revengeful feelings in my mind; let us laugh and play together." Nor was the invitation declined. Man, so suspicious of his fellow-man, is credulous to the advances of Nature. In a few hours death and destruction—the loss of their comrades, the ruin of their floating home—were by the majority of the crew of the *Ganges* almost forgotten; all hands went busily to work to throw open the ports and to dry and air the ship, to examine the provisions and the stores, and even to clean the small arms. They did this not only with alacrity but cheerfulness; they could not resist the sunny smile of the sea and the warm kisses of the favouring wind. Even Aunt Sophia was wonderfully enlivened by them.

"Dearest Edith," said she, "the air is so fresh and the sky so bright, surely it would do you good to come on deck."

"On deck! Oh, no," cried the poor girl with a shudder; "let us remain here, I entreat you."

To come on deck and gaze upon the sea seemed to her like an invitation to behold her lover's grave. Action, indeed, of any kind had become abhorrent to her. She secretly entertained a sort of hope that by remaining where she was, which she knew to be unwholesome for her, she might pine away and die without the sin of suicide. Her state of mind was not at all understood by Aunt Sophia, though she thoroughly sympathized with her calamity—a circumstance which often happens to those in sorrow: it is easier to weep with those that weep than to hit upon the springs of consolation. It would have been wiser for the present to have avoided the subject of her niece's loss; the wound was too fresh and tender to be touched upon ever so lightly. But Aunt Sophia thought differently: had

their relations been reversed she would have found comfort from discoursing upon it, and she judged Edith by herself.

"He is not lost but gone before, my darling," she would murmur gently; but her well-meant endeavours at consolation met with no response; to the mind agonized by bereavement such conventional remedies are positive aggravations of calamity; they seem to wrong by their ineffectualness and insignificance the memory which it holds so sacred, and to make light of the loss which it deploras. Once she even ventured to repeat a phrase which had often passed Edith's lips as she lay half unconscious during her first hours of woe. "'Faithful and true, living or dead,' my darling, you are as much his own, and he yours, remember, as though he were still with you."

But Edith shook her head with a look of pained displeasure. The saying that had been wont to comfort her when there was no present need for its application, was no consolation now. It is doubtful whether under similar circumstances there ever is much consolation in it. The widower goes to his wife's grave and there weeps tears of blood; for, after all, whatever hateful change may have taken place in her, there she lies whom his soul loved. He cannot so easily picture her, under he knows not what altered conditions, in the skies, or keep his heart up with the thought of visiting her there. It is not that the promise is uncertain, but that it is so difficult to picture its realization. The truth is that in very great calamities, and unless the suffering soul is permeated by religious feeling, the world to come has as little interest for us as the present world: both alike, for a time at least, seem dull, stale, and unprofitable. The voice of prayer itself is stifled upon the lips by the chill fingers of misery. To the desolate and bereaved heart it seems that there is nothing left to be prayed for; no, not even death itself. Such, in fact, was Edith Norbury's case; and it was not to be

wondered at, under such circumstances, that Aunt Sophia's cheering news of fine weather and progress fell upon deaf ears. It would have been neither good nor bad tidings to Edith had she been even told that the ship was in sight of port. This, however, the *Ganges* was very far from being.

For the first time for many days the captain had been able to get an 'observation,' by which he found their latitude to be 10 deg. 16 min. north. He also found means to try the current, which was setting to the E.N.E. at half a mile an hour. Their rate of sailing was necessarily very slow, and they were entirely out of the track of ships, only one of which, indeed (and that pronounced to be a phantom), they had set eyes on since they left Simon's Bay. On the other hand, they had a good store of provisions on board, notwithstanding that some of it had been spoilt by the rain and sea; and the thoughts of the sailors, which had been directed to Davey's Locker with grave doubts as to the accommodation it would be likely to afford them, were turning lightly towards Calcutta.

One night, however, the wind began to freshen, and though, even in the ship's crippled condition, Mr. Marston did not think so seriously of it as to arouse the captain, taking a few hours' rest after his prolonged exertions, there were signs of more trouble in store for them. It was, however, far from being of the same kind. A little after midnight, and with heavy rain falling, the man on the look-out suddenly cried "Breakers ahead!" and the call had hardly reached the officer on deck when the ship struck with terrific violence. The horror and dismay were universal, for such a contingency had never been anticipated. It seemed almost as likely that an iceberg should have loomed upon them out of the murk and mist. All below, save the two ladies, were on deck in five minutes, and were thronging about the captain in an unusual manner, as though appealing to an authority whom they trusted in a misfortune of which they had no experience,

and in which they knew not how to act. Unhappily there was no remedy for their calamity but to wait for dawn, and in the mean time to prepare for the worst, which was only too certain to happen. The *Ganges*, which had survived so much, it was now plain was doomed. Every shock of the sea, from which she could no longer escape, caused her a damage more or less vital. In less than an hour the water was as high as the lower-deck hatchways; and, moreover, she was heeling over to one side. The ammunition and provisions were therefore all brought up and placed under tarpaulins. The two remaining boats were hoisted out, supplied with arms, food, and water, and kept under the lee of the ship to receive the crew when she should go to pieces. When all was done that could be done in such a strait the ladies were sent for, as it was thought perilous for them to remain any longer below. Mr. Marston assisted Aunt Sophia up the companion-ladder, and Mr. Ainsworth took charge of Edith. Both ladies were in deep mourning, and their appearance excited not a little interest notwithstanding the emergency of the occasion.

The scene in which they found themselves was a very strange one. Nearly one half of the vessel was already submerged; but the quarter-deck, resting on the rocks, was almost clear of water, while the quarter-boards afforded some shelter from the sea and rain. Here the captain received them with great sympathy but perfect cheerfulness, while the crew stood around him in enforced inaction. Aunt Sophia was so prostrated by fatigue and terror that she was only too thankful to sit down and shut her eyes to such sights around her as the dim light rendered visible: among which the most horrible were the black rocks showing through the white foam of the breakers. Her attitude, with clasped hands and closed lips—though, as she afterwards owned, she had the greatest difficulty to keep herself from screaming—might well have been taken for one of resignation. Edith, on the other hand, looked around her

with impassive calm. That indifference of despair possessed her which surpasses in its outward manifestation the highest heroism. Death was as free from terrors for her as life of hopes.

The captain had feared the effect of the appearance of his lady passengers upon the crew, and was not slow to take advantage of their unexpected calmness and courage. He had intended to address his people on the course of conduct he expected from them, and this incident afforded him an admirable text. If such courageous behaviour was seen in women tenderly nurtured and unaccustomed to peril, what might not be expected of men and sailors like themselves? He did not attempt to make light of the calamity that had befallen them: it was certain that the *Ganges* would never float again, and it was probable that in a few hours she would go to pieces. Discipline and obedience to authority were the virtues which alone could assist them in such a strait. When similar misfortunes happened, he reminded them, they had been often rendered irremediable by license and despair. Let them at least meet their fate like men, and in their sane minds, without resort to the spirit-room.

This brief discourse was received with a round of hearty cheers, which was repeated with even greater enthusiasm when the captain announced that two glasses of wine should be at once administered to every man, with a biscuit between them. In their wet and worn condition it was a refreshment greatly needed, and its effect was excellent. No one, the authorities upon suicide tell us, ever shuffles off his mortal coil within two hours of a meal; for though things are said to be "looked at through a glass darkly," exactly the reverse happens when the medium is a wine-glass. The poor souls on the deck of the *Ganges*, or on what was left of it, needed all the encouragement they could get as they waited through those weary hours, and longed like a sick man for the dawn.

At last it came, and disclosed a small island some three miles away, with some larger ones much further off to the eastward. The two boats were immediately manned and oared and sent on shore with instructions to bring back an immediate report; while in the mean time, for they were quite insufficient for the transport of the crew, and the ship might at any moment go to pieces, those who were left on board applied themselves to the construction of a raft. The work, though very difficult by reason of constant interruptions to it caused by the shocks and inundations of the waves, was entered upon without the least confusion, and with as perfect discipline as though the vessel, instead of being a wreck upon rocks, had been lying at anchor at Spithead. The spectacle of this dutiful enthusiasm aroused Edith from her lethargy. That sympathy with our fellow-creatures in their physical struggles against fate, which is felt even by the dullest and most selfish, won her for the moment from the contemplation of her own misery. Her bruised heart began to beat once more in unison with human endeavour. As the captain stooped over her as he passed by, to arrange a rug that had been thrown over her shoulders, she could not forbear an expression of admiration at the conduct of his crew.

"That is partly your doing, Miss Edith," he answered pleasantly. "Where women show themselves heroines it is impossible for men to be cowards."

"I am not brave, Captain Head," she answered with a faint smile, "but I have courage enough to hear the truth. In two words—can you tell me what is our real position?"

"That will depend upon the report from the boats; but I have little doubt that we shall all get to land."

"And what land is it? I entreat you," she added, reading reluctance on his face, "to tell me the worst."

"My dear young lady," he answered gently, "you lay on me an unwelcome task. I know no more of that land than you do. It is not marked on the chart. No human

eyes, it may be, have ever seen it beside our own. On the other hand, it may be inhabited by some savage race ; that, of course, would be a bad business for us."

"And if not?"

"Well, if not, I fear we must make up our minds to stay there for some time, until we are in our turn discovered ; perhaps even for ever."

"Our sentence is either death, in fact, or transportation for life?"

"It is something like it, I fear : but that is no reason why we should lose heart, my dear young lady."

"Certainly not. Thanks, captain," was her cheerful reply. "A new life in a new land," she murmured to herself. It was a prospect, though without attractions, which at least appeared less repulsive to her than a new life in the old one.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAND.

MAN, it is said, is the creature of circumstances ; but not always so. The martyr in his flames, for example, is certainly independent of them ; so is the intending suicide ; and, generally, we may say that they have less influence over us in proportion to our misfortunes. There are cases indeed when continuous loss and disappointment place the simplest of us in a higher position than any to which philosophy can attain ; when, in other words, we are so miserable that we care not what befalls us. It is an occurrence of which nobody is envious, but it has a certain dignity, nevertheless, such as the bastard melancholy, which it is still the fashion with some of us to assume, aspires to in vain.

It was wonderful, even to herself, with what equanimity

Edith contemplated the scene in which all those about her took so keen an interest. So long as the construction of the raft was in progress, occupation prevented the intrusion of discouragement; but when all was done and nothing remained but to await the return of the boats, without which the raft was almost useless, a profound depression succeeded to exertion; the daylight was fast waning; the sea was on the whole less violent, but the structure on which it made its assaults was growing manifestly less able to resist them. At last a great cry of joy arose from all. It was only the sight of the boats that had parted from them a few hours before, that evoked it; but, when in calamity, men are thankful for small mercies; or, rather, no mercy seems small to them; when we listen in our mute despair by the death-bed of our dear ones, one word, ay even a groan, is music.

Aunt Sophia threw herself into Edith's arms, and strong men, moved by an overpowering impulse, shook hands with one another. Then all descended into the raft—a loose and shifting mass at the best—to which the ladies had to be secured by ropes. The pinnacle was to take it in tow, and the jolly boat, until they had passed the reef, which lay behind them and the island, was to tow the pinnacle. When all was ready, the boatswain sounded his whistle, and Captain Head, though loath to leave the ship, joined his crew. It wrung his heart to quit his vessel, and every one shared his sorrow in a less degree. Though in ruins, it was still their dwelling-place, and, in departing from it, they seemed to be saying good-bye for ever to all that made what they called home. To the very last the old *Ganges* sheltered them by breaking the shocks of the sea, but not till they had got a few boat-lengths away from her did they fully appreciate the service she had thus afforded them. Every wave now broke over them, and the blinding spray hid not only the pinnacle from the sight of those on the raft, but those on the raft from one another.

As for the ladies, their relative positions of aunt and niece, chaperon and charge, had become reversed ; the elder lady, prostrated with terror, hid her face in the younger's lap, and clung round her waist, as the raft rose and fell upon the long rollers, or was dragged through the mist and foam that crested them. Edith, on the other hand, gazed steadily upon them with eyes that seemed not so much to defy as to invite them to do their worst, which, indeed, as it seemed to her, they had already done. Mr. Ainsworth and young Conolly did what they could to shield both ladies with a tarpaulin, thanks to which they were the only tenants on the raft who were not wetted to the skin.

Notwithstanding that when they had once cleared the reef they found themselves in smoother water, their progress was so slow that in order to reach the land before nightfall it became necessary to anchor the raft with a grapnel, and to transfer its occupants to the pinnacle, by which at last, in batches, they were all landed.

Their provisions had thus for the present to be left behind them ; wet, cold, hungry, on an unknown shore, life alone seemed left to them, and not much even of that ; yet the first act of these unhappy people was to shake hands and congratulate one another upon their common safety. A cheese, some biscuits, and a little water formed their supper ; and with the priming of a pistol they managed to kindle a fire, by which they dried their clothes, after which they lay down to sleep under such shelter as they could find. By the foresight of the officers, a little tent had been raised for the accommodation of the two ladies, into which they presently crept. A ship's lantern had been hung from the roof, and by its light they perceived that some bedding had been provided, with two chairs and a small looking-glass ; this last a characteristic tribute from man to woman which drew a faint smile from Edith.

"What amuses you, dear?" murmured Aunt Sophia,

with a rueful glance at their surroundings. "I should never have thought you had it in you to smile."

To external matters Edith was indeed wholly indifferent; they had almost ceased to occupy a place in her mind. As she lay down to rest by Aunt Sophia's side her mind was as far asunder from that of her companion as pole from pole. The thoughts of the elder lady were fixed upon the present and the future; on the woeful circumstances in which she found herself placed, and on the scanty hopes of deliverance. The absence of comforts, of society, and of all that had hitherto constituted existence for her appalled her; the roar of the angry waves seemed to bid her despair of ever leaving that out-of-the-way sea-girt prison. The thoughts of the younger concerned themselves with the past only. For her the cup of life seemed to contain no longer joy or sorrow, and the fabric and the fashion of it were therefore indifferent to her. The thunder of the surf spoke to her not of the loss to come, but of the loss that had already befallen her—it was the volley over her dead hero's grave.

Notwithstanding the agitation of their minds and their adverse surroundings, there presently fell such dreamless sleep upon them both as they had not experienced for weeks.

Edith woke in broad daylight and to almost unbroken silence. In the distance alone was heard the whisper of the wave as it wooed the unwilling sand to its embrace. Though their tent had been pitched in a spot comparatively retired, the bustle and movement of so many persons making the best of strange quarters, and the monotonous tread of the sentries who had been placed about their improvised camp, had been heard on all sides when they retired to rest. Not a voice, not a footstep, now gave token of human presence.

"Edie, dear, are you awake?" said Aunt Sophia in tremulous tones.

"Yes, dear."

"I have been awake for hours, but did not like to disturb you. It is so very still, I am sure something dreadful has happened. Is it possible that we have been deserted?"

"Certainly not. Fate is very cruel, but the one crime she cannot commit is to shake the loyalty of a noble heart."

"True; Captain Head, as you say, is too much of a man of honour to leave two defenceless women to shift for themselves because they were an encumbrance to him. Then, Mr. Ainsworth, too—it would be very unlike a clergyman, would it not? And I am sure that charming little midshipman would never leave *you*."

"My *dear* Sophy! What nonsense!"

"Of course I know it's nonsense; it's the devotion of a child; but still he *is* devoted to you; and Mr. Marston and Mr. Redmayne, though they say very little—and indeed I wish I could hear them say *anything* just now—are officers and gentlemen. Still it is so *very* quiet. I have been thinking all sorts of things. Suppose they have been all murdered by the savages."

"What savages?"

"Well, of course there are savages; who ever heard of an undiscovered island—I heard Mr. Doyle say it was undiscovered—without savages? By the bye, there is good Mr. Doyle! Don't be alarmed; I don't mean to say I see him—I wish I could see *anybody*—I was merely reckoning up our friends."

"I say again," said Edith gravely, "friends do not desert us of their own free will, though Fate may snatch them away. Let us get up and look about us."

Their toilet was not a prolonged one, they had no extensive wardrobe to choose from, having indeed only the clothes which, as the phrase goes, "they stood up in," and in which they had lain down. To men this may seem a small matter, but to the two ladies to whom such an experience was unknown, it was significant enough of their

new position. As Aunt Sophia surveyed herself in the little hand-glass she burst into tears.

"What has happened?" inquired Edith with anxiety.

"Nothing. I am thinking of what is going to happen. If we are to stay here, Heaven knows how long, what *will* become of us? I mean of our gowns. In a month they will be dowdy to the last degree. In two months they will be in rags."

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," said Edith sententiously.

"Yes, but they are not sufficient for the day. At least mine is not; it is falling to pieces already: and where are we to get needles and thread? My dear, have you such a thing about you as a pin?"

"Yes."

"Come, that's something," ejaculated Aunt Sophia.

It is indeed a subject of satisfaction when, though in extreme straits, we find that we are not actually deprived of the necessaries of life. For the moment the consciousness of having repaired her clothes put the apprehension of savages out of this lady's mind; it was a proof, too, that she did not in her heart believe that they had been deserted by unkind man.

On issuing from the tent a most lovely view presented itself. The sapphire sky was without a cloud—the sea, though of a deeper blue, glittered with endless smiles. Soft, silvery sand was beneath their feet. Above them towered a precipitous hill, broken with a thousand crags, overgrown by flowery creepers, and crested with full-foliaged trees. The air had a mixture of freshness and sweetness such as they had never experienced before; to draw their breath was itself a luxury.

"How very, very beautiful!" exclaimed Edith. "See how high the sun is in the heavens; it must be midday."

"Then where on earth are our people?"

As if in answer to this appeal a human figure presented

itself on one of the rocks above them, and took off his hat in salutation. It was Master Lewis Conolly, who, the next instant, sliding down what looked like a rope of flowers, presented himself before them.

"You dear, good boy," cried Aunt Sophia ecstatically. "I knew you would not be far away from us. Where is everybody else? And why are we thus left all alone?"

"The captain gave orders that you ladies were not to be disturbed," answered the youth respectfully. "I have been on sentry yonder over you for the last three hours, though danger could hardly have befallen you, since the island is quite uninhabited."

"Then they *are* gone!" ejaculated Aunt Sophia, distractedly.

"What, our people? Well, most of them are on board the wreck. Mr. Ainsworth, however, is preparing breakfast for us yonder." He pointed to a thin line of smoke above a ridge of rocks which separated the little cove in which their tent was placed from the larger bay where the boats had landed, and which, in the darkness and confusion of the previous night, had seemed one with it.

"I hope he is not toasting the cheese," murmured Aunt Sophia, from whose mind, agitated beyond its powers, all sense of proportion had vanished, and in which the apprehension of one trouble only disappeared to give place to some new foreboding. "I am very hungry, but I don't think I *could* eat that cheese again."

The young midshipman only replied by a good-humoured laugh, as he piloted the ladies to the spot in question. On their way Edith could not but remark with what judgment and solicitude, notwithstanding the disorder that had apparently reigned the previous evening, their own place of refuge had been selected. "Ladies' Bay," as it was afterwards called, was, indeed, admirably fitted for the purpose to which the captain had assigned it. The reef of rocks between it and the larger bay ran high enough to

afford it perfect privacy, while at the same time communication with it, by a passage close under the open cliff, was maintained in all conditions of the tide.

It was curious, while gratefully acknowledging this kindly foresight of her fellow-creatures, how bitterly she resented the cruelty of fortune. Her own mind, like that of her companion, was, in truth, for the time, thrown off its balance, though in a different fashion. The very kindness which had been shown her on all hands increased that rebellious feeling which rises in the human heart—and often highest in the most gentle—in the dark hour of bereavement; the sufferings to which those companions to whose good offices she was so much indebted were exposed, seemed only another proof of the harshness and injustice of Fate. The force of circumstances could hardly have had a stronger illustration; for in matters of faith and feeling, Edith Norbury had been hitherto in no way different from the majority of those of her sex and position in life, who accept the decrees of Providence with that facile submission which is paid to a limited monarchy which no one suspects of an arbitrary or unjust act.

CHAPTER XVII.

RESCUE BAY.

RESCUE BAY, as it was presently christened by common consent, in which the ladies now found themselves, presented a very different appearance from that which it had offered to their eyes twelve hours before. Not a trace of storm was to be seen on sea or shore; the breeze, which blew from the land, only just sufficed to spread the Union Jack which had already been planted on the summit of the wooden cliff, not so much in sign of sovereignty as to attract, without loss of time, the attention of a passing vessel, if such

perchance should, like their own, be ever driven from her course into those unfrequented seas. The great expanse of glittering sand was already marked out into spaces for the reception of human tenants, or for the accommodation of stores, a goodly heap of which was already piled above high-water mark. Knots of men, as busy as bees, were drying powder in the sun or sitting under the shade of the rocks with which the sand was interspersed, cleaning and polishing their small arms.

It was noticeable that, notwithstanding this unusual industry, every man now and then looked up from his occupation to gaze seawards, where operations were going on, on which, as they well knew, depended not only their hopes of future enfranchisement, but it might be even their means of subsistence. A hasty survey of the island had already been made, which, as has been said, had been found to be uninhabited ; but it still remained to be seen whether it offered any sustenance for human life. Water, indeed, it possessed in plenty, for down the centre of the cliff there fell, with leaps and bounds, a silver stream of sufficient volume to make its course visible through the sand until it reached the shore, where it emptied itself into a land-locked harbour.

The reef, in fact, on which the *Ganges* had come to grief formed a natural breakwater which, though extending to the shore in a westward direction, left on the east a sufficiently broad passage to have admitted her with safety in daylight in almost any weather ; while, once under its protection, she could have anchored in company with a dozen ships of the same size, shielded even from the east wind by a projecting promontory of the land. The question now on which so much was depending, was whether the ship could be got off, in which case it could possibly be towed into harbour and repaired.

In the mean time, while the present fine weather lasted, every moment of daylight was utilized in bringing off

stores, provisions, and every article which could conduce to the general comfort and convenience. For this purpose, not only the boats, but also the raft, had been despatched to the reef and was now anchored on the sheltered side of it, and with the naked eye the men could be perceived making their way across the rocks that composed it, each with his burthen on his back, like ants on an ant-hill.

It was a strange and stirring spectacle, and moved the two ladies much, though in a different manner. Edith gazed upon it with admiration, which was not without a touch of cynicism. Where would be the use, was the reflection that occurred to her, of all that industry and solicitude if the wanton wind should rise but for an hour, or the slumberous sea begin to yawn. To Aunt Sophia's eyes it seemed that success must needs crown such arduous efforts. She even ventured to picture herself once more in England, no longer the commonplace and conventional personage whose *rôle* she had hitherto been content to play, but a female Ulysses, on whose lips, as she detailed her wanderings and adventures, quite the best society would be eager to hang.

The interest of this distant scene for the moment indeed made the two new-comers quite oblivious to the fact that Mr. Ainsworth was waiting for them, and his breakfast, in the foreground. He had kindled a fire on which some coffee was preparing, and spread out a little table-cloth on the sand, whereon potted meats, marmalade, and other condiments were laid, as for a picnic.

"Where on earth did you get all these dainties?" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, as she warmly shook hands with him, her spirits already elevated, rising several degrees higher at the contemplation of a feast, which the air of the place rendered as welcome as it was unexpected. "My dear Edith, there are actually eggs!"

"The two surviving fowls, like all the rest of us, have been doing their duty," returned the chaplain, as pleased

with the younger lady's grateful smile as by her companion's more exuberant satisfaction. "It is to Mr. Marston that you are indebted for the sundries, and to Mr. Redmayne for the potted shrimps. Mr. Doyle contributed the marmalade, but that is not to be put to his credit, for out of two pots which he brought ashore one broke in his pocket. The captain himself supplied the coffee-pot and its contents, and your humble servant collected the sticks for the fire."

"But where, except the sticks, did it all come from, Mr. Ainsworth?" inquired Edith. "Is it possible that you gentlemen have been ransacking the *Ganges* for our comfort, while we two sluggards were asleep?"

"While you were taking that rest which nature demanded, let us rather say, and which your courage and conduct, permit me to add, have nobly earned, some of the officers and a boat's crew made a trial trip to our old home, and picked up what they could. They are now laying her under contributions on a much more extended scale. The necessity of it is plain enough, but it goes sorely against the grain with our poor captain. He says that it seems to him like taking the money out of the pocket of a dead friend."

"Does he think, then, there is no hope of the ship's ever being got off?" inquired Aunt Sophia, looking up from her egg as if it were addled.

"He cannot say that for certain till he has made a more particular survey of the wreck," said the chaplain evasively, at the same time bringing a telescope to bear upon the object in question. "He is now coming off in the jolly-boat, I see, and will no doubt bring us news of the matter. However it may be, dear ladies," he added gravely, "let us remember we have very much to be thankful for even as it is."

"That is just what Robinson Crusoe said, or was it the parrot?" observed Aunt Sophia. Nothing was further from

her thoughts than any disrespect to the chaplain, but the effect of the observation was disastrous.

"In such a condition as our own, Miss Norbury," returned Mr. Ainsworth reprovingly, "believe me, that the virtue it behoves us most to practise is that of resignation to the will of Providence."

"No doubt, no doubt; but let us hope that things will not come to the worst," said Aunt Sophia naïvely.

"Never say die, while there's a shot in the locker," observed Master Conolly, as he disposed of a sardine neatly packed in a layer of marmalade, between a couple of sweet biscuits. It was a contribution apposite enough to the conversation, but not on the whole calculated to allay irritation. A glance which the good chaplain happened to cast at Edith, however, put all indignation out of his mind. In that calm and unmoved face he read, as he thought, an absolute submission to the decree of Fate, and remembering what she had undergone, his heart found no room in it except for pity. A silence fell upon the little group as they watched the boat, which was bringing the judge and their sentence with it. It seemed to them that he stepped out of it with a certain slowness and dignity which—though dignity was by no means naturally wanting with him—spoke of disaster nobly faced; it might, however, be the mere sense of responsibility which their position must in any case have entailed upon him. He came towards them with firm, resolute steps, and took off his cap to his fair guests with a cheerful smile.

"I hope, Mr. Ainsworth, you have taken care that these ladies, who have been placed in your especial charge, have been well provided for?"

"Indeed," said Aunt Sophia, "we have fared most luxuriously, Captain Head. My niece and I, indeed, have no words to thank you for the consideration and kindness with which we have been treated by everybody."

"That is well, ladies. So it will be, I am confident, to

the end, however long we may be fated to remain in our present quarters."

"Then—then," quavered Aunt Sophia, "you think there is no hope——"

"As regards the ship, I regret to say, a few days—a few hours, if the wind should rise—will, in my opinion, see the last of her."

"Oh, Captain Head, dear Captain Head, do you really mean that we shall never see home again?"

"We are, dear madam, as Mr. Ainsworth here will tell you better than I," said the captain gently, "in the hands of God. He will do what seems best to Him and doubtless best for us. I do not ask you to give up hope, if hope is a comfort to you, but I think it would be better for us all to face the facts. I trust we shall all do what in us lies, like Englishmen and Englishwomen, for ourselves and one another; but in my judgment, since you ask me, I think we shall never see old England more."

At these words, which were delivered by the honest captain with a certain solemn simplicity that went home to the hearts of his hearers, Aunt Sophia covered her face with her hands and wept bitterly.

Edith instantly rose, and with a glance at the rest, which gentle and apologetic though it was, forbade them to follow, led her agitated companion to her tent. The others stood looking at one another in consternation, as men, who are not by nature 'roughs,' are wont to do at the sight of a woman's tears.

"What a fool's trick it was 'of mine," murmured the captain penitently, "to blurt out the truth like that."

"You have nothing to reproach yourself with," returned the chaplain, confidently. "It is much better that she should know the worst at once, than delude herself with false hopes."

There was an uncomfortable pause, and then the captain, lowering his voice, observed, "I was not thinking so much

of the one that was working at the pumps, but of the other. Did you hear what that poor girl said when I told them that we should never see old England more? She said, 'Thank Heaven.'"

"Yes, I heard her. I don't think, however, she quite knew what she was saying."

"Driven out of her wits, eh, by my blundering speech? Well, the next time I have any bad news for her you shall break it yourself. Heaven knows I had rather go without my breakfast any day than she should have an ache in her little finger. But since the mischief's done, and the coffee's here, you may pour me out a cup, Conolly."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S SPEECH.

As when a railway train is rapidly emptied of its luggage on a platform when the express is almost due behind it, so were the contents of the *Ganges* hurried over her side and into the boats. Not an hour of the calm weather, nor of daylight, was wasted; for it was well understood by all, that whatever seemed precious now would have a fancy value a few weeks hence, and might even make the difference of life or death. Though the captain's resolution as regards the vessel was acknowledged to be a sound one, there was still a hope that, after all which was necessary to their immediate existence should be got out of her, her timbers might be made use of to build another ship; but for this a long spell of fine weather was indispensable, as the conveyance of anything of size and weight across the reef was very difficult, and the prognostications of the barometer were far from favourable. For the present, however, morning after morning dawned in sunshine and with softest airs, and

every evening saw the acquisitions from the ship immensely increased. To the more thoughtless and sanguine, it seemed that the stores thus accumulated would last for ever; they said to themselves with Robinson Crusoe, that never before were shipwrecked men so well provided; but to those of better judgment it was plain, that unless the island itself could be made to yield them support, they would be in the position of men who live upon their principal, and that a day must needs come, and that at no distant date, when there would be nothing left to feed so many hungry mouths.

The investigation of the capabilities of their place of exile were, however, for the time postponed for the work of salvage. The spectacle of so much industry amid a scene so fair was in itself exhilarating. If our first parents had had some occupation in their idle hours in the Garden of Eden, besides loafing and spooning, it is probable that they would not have made such a fiasco of matters. Even the ladies, who might easily have pleaded exemption from the common toil, put Eve to shame in this respect, for instead of roaming over their lovely dwelling-place in search of fruit, they busied themselves in sorting out whatever articles required care and good keeping, and in storing them afresh in such places as the captain deemed desirable. This employment prevented their minds from dwelling upon their respective calamities, while the invigorating, though genial, climate restored both strength and spirit.

The solicitude with which they were treated by almost all hands, had also its encouraging effect, and they often found themselves, to their own astonishment, discoursing of things around them, as though they had been the environments of ordinary life, rather than of an abnormal and exceptional position. As a rule Edith was the consoler; or, rather, by avoiding all reference to their past, beguiled her companion's thoughts from it. Now and then, however,

she would, as it were unawares, make some allusion to it, which revealed the sepulchre where her heart was buried. On such occasions it was the elder lady's part, not indeed to comfort her, for such a task she knew to be beyond her power, but to turn the talk to other subjects.

"I cannot help thinking, Aunt Sophia," said Edith, as the two ladies sat in their tent one evening comforting themselves with a cup of tea after the labours of the day, "that this must be one of the Enchanted Isles that sailors believed in until within the last hundred years."

"That must be before the geographical books began to be published, I suppose?"

"Not at all. I remember in that old geography of De Lisle, which dear papa used to set such store on, they were marked in a map as Basil and Asmuda. Even so late, he once told me, as 1750, an island never before known, but covered with fields and woods, and very fertile, was seen in the Atlantic, and so strongly vouched for, that ships were sent from England to explore it."

"I hope they will be sent to look for this one," sighed Aunt Sophia.

"It is hardly likely, though the parallel holds good in other respects; for De Lisle's notion was that it was the country of ghosts, and are we not here the ghosts of our former selves?"

"I must confess that we have very good appetites for ghosts," observed Aunt Sophia drily; a rejoinder, simple and commonplace though it was, far more judicious and effective than any falling in with the other's mood would have been. It had, also, the advantage of being true. In their new abode their physical health was perfect; in such a climate, indeed, there was little fear of its being otherwise, except through the monotony of their lives; and of this, as it turned out, the castaways had not long to complain.

It was the fifth evening after their disaster, and every-

thing that could conduce to use and comfort had been taken out of the vessel. On the next morning it was understood that the much more serious work of taking her to pieces was to be commenced. The men were in excellent spirits in anticipation of this, the first step towards escape from exile, though the carpenter had reported that the bands of the ship had given signs of starting, and that it was unlikely she could hold together much longer. The ladies were still at their tea, when suddenly the boatswain's whistle sounded thrice. They knew it to be the signal for the assembly of the whole ship's company, and started up in some alarm. Though not of course included in the summons, they immediately repaired to the larger bay, and on their way were met by Master Conolly, who, foreseeing their apprehensions, had come in haste to allay them. Some trouble, he explained, had arisen with one or two of the men, who had helped themselves from one of the liquor casks, and the captain was about to address the ship's company upon the matter.

In vain the young midshipman endeavoured to persuade his fair companions to return to their tent; their curiosity was too strong to be overcome, and he could only induce them to accept his escort—a protection which, as it turned out, was not altogether superfluous. Not one or two only, but a good many of the men, exhausted with their day's work, and urged by the natural liking which most seamen entertain for strong liquor, had taken advantage of the accidental breaking of a cask of rum, to drink freely, and had become very noisy and elated. They gave, indeed, a mechanical obedience to the summons of the boatswain, but it was plain from their air and manner that they were in no condition to listen to the voice of authority. The majority of the crew, however, who with them had formed a ring about the captain and his officers, maintained an attitude of respectful attention. Something had already happened which was not intelligible to the new-comers, but

which could be partly guessed at by the attitude of the persons concerned. Close to the captain were three sailors, Mellor, Rudge, and Murdoch, looking very flushed, and to say truth, somewhat mutinous. They had borne by no means a good character on board the *Ganges*, so that it was not surprising that they should have misconducted themselves on shore. Yet the captain not only regarded them with such troubled and anxious looks, as were inexplicable to all acquainted with his resolute and dauntless character, but was addressing them in terms of consideration rather than remonstrance. "You have had a hard day's work and little to eat, and therefore there is much excuse for you. But I must say to you, as indeed I say to all, that there is nothing more dangerous to persons in our condition than indulgence in drink."

"That's all gammon," interrupted Murdoch huskily; he was a huge man, beside whose giant form, with his large arms and hairy chest, even the captain's stalwart frame was dwarfed; "since we are here we mean to enjoy ourselves, and we don't mean to be preached to neither, nor yet bully-ragged as though we were still on board of that cursed old hulk yonder."

"That's so," and "So says I," growled the other two men, while a faint murmur of applause went up from a few others in different parts of the assembly which showed that they were not without their sympathizers.

The majority, however, maintained a silence which was equally significant. They seemed only less amazed at their comrades' audacity than at the patience and toleration with which it had been borne.

"I am sorry," returned the captain, in firm but quiet tones, which made themselves audible even to those who, like the ladies and their conductor, stood on the very outskirts of the crowd, "that you should so speak of the old ship which has been our home so long, and I hope, upon the whole, not an unhappy one."

"Quite right, sir," "A good home," "Ay, and with a good captain, too," went up from the now excited throng in all directions. The captain took off his cap, and the men began to cheer, but became instantly silent as he recommenced.

"I say I am sorry that any man who has sailed with me should entertain such unpleasant recollections of his voyage, or of the 'cursed old hulk' as he calls it, which we are looking on yonder, it may be, for the last time."

"We don't want no palaver; we wants to enjoy ourselves, we wants rum," cried the mutineers, with drunken vehemence.

"Let the captain speak." "Never mind black Murdoch, sir." "Three cheers for the old *Ganges*!" replied the crowd.

"Rum is very good in its way, but we may have too much of it," observed the captain, with all the gentleness of a moralist, "and especially when, as in our case, men are cast ashore upon an unknown land, subject it may be to the attack of savages, at whose mercy our lives may be placed at any moment, and dependent for our slender chance of escape upon the efficiency and alertness of those on the watch for a passing sail. It would be hard to be deprived of all hope of seeing our own country again, with our wives and sweethearts, because some drunken scoundrel or another couldn't keep from the rum."

"That's so!" "Three cheers for our wives and little ones!" "Home, sweet Home!" "You know what's best for us, captain!"

"I think I do; but as has been proved to me pretty clearly by the conduct of one or two of you here, whom I will not name, I am no longer your captain."

"We know that fast enough, master," exclaimed Murdoch, triumphantly; "you are no master now, nor ever will be, yah!"

"Well, that is a matter entirely for our own consideration,

my men," continued the captain; "the most votes must carry it. It is quite true, since the *Ganges* is not a King's ship, that with the loss of her, I have lost command of *you*. You no longer owe me any obedience; but that some one to hold supreme authority must be chosen by you, is certain, if we would live here for a day, without flying at each other's throats. Fix upon whom you will, so long as he be honest and sober, but when he is once chosen let his will be law. Even what has occurred to-night shows, I think, the necessity for such an arrangement, while to-morrow—well, for all we know, to-morrow it may be too late to make it. Suppose an enemy attack us, with no one to give an order how to repulse him. Suppose a ship came in sight, and fifty men crowd into a boat where there is only space for ten, and we lose her!"

"Right, right, we'll choose *you*, captain, there's nobody but *you* to choose," came from all parts of the crowd.

"Oh, yes, there are lots of others to choose from," continued the captain smiling, "and whom you do choose must be elected in a proper manner. It won't do to shout for Jones to-day and for Smith to-morrow, and your decision, whatever it be, must be put down in writing. You will find a paper in yonder tent, with pen and ink all ready for you, and the chaplain to explain matters, and show where the mark must be put for those who are no scholars. Every one in the ship's company, officers and men, will find his name there, and every one will vote for whom he likes; only remember this, that once recorded, it cannot be cancelled. Now go and choose your king."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE PLEBISCITE.

THE notion of a Plebiscite is always an attractive one to all communities.

It was true that on the present occasion the matter was generally understood to have a foregone conclusion. The majority of the men were too much attached to their old captain, and had too great confidence in him, to think of electing any one else to rule over them; but still they were flattered by the idea of choosing for themselves. They crowded into the tent with alacrity, where Mr. Ainsworth was seated at the table with "the agreement," as it was simply called, but on which in truth very much depended. It set forth the peculiarity of their position, and the necessity it involved of having some lawgiver and leader, against whose fiat there should be no appeal; while it left to every man the power of giving his vote to any member of the ship's company he pleased.

The proceedings were not without a certain solemnity, for those who took part in it were filled at least as much with the sense of their own importance as of that of the matter in hand; nor was the ceremony by any means a brief one. Many of the sailors could not write, and most of them had to be separately instructed in the novel duty demanded of them; while even the most accomplished took some time, with much leaning of their heads upon one side and screwing of their courage (and their mouths) to the sticking-place to execute their autographs. At last, however, all was done, though not before the fall of night had necessitated the use of torches in the tent, which cast their lurid glare upon a scene which was in truth eminently picturesque and striking. In the open air, on the other hand, there was still light sufficient for the conclusion of the proceedings.

The chaplain presently emerged from the tent bearing the document with its long file of signatures, and, followed by the whole of the ship's company, moved towards the spot where the captain with his officers, or, rather, with those who had hitherto occupied that position on board the *Ganges*, awaited his approach. After a few words of preface, Mr. Ainsworth stated that one other person only beside their late commander had been nominated for the post of president, or leader, and as the names of those who had voted for the individual in question were but few, he suggested that it would be more convenient to read them out in the first place.

At this there was some applause, and not a little laughter of the sarcastic sort, which was instantly stilled at the sound of the captain's voice.

"If, as I understand, my men," he said, "the great majority of you have decided to replace in my hands the authority which I before possessed, it seems to me that it would be invidious, and, indeed, unfair, to those who have come to a contrary conclusion, that their names should be made public. I neither wish to know who they are, nor to know who it is that in their judgment has appeared to them preferable to myself. I shall take it for granted that both he and they will acquiesce in the decision of their shipmates, as I should myself have done had the case been reversed; and I hope no feeling of bitterness or disappointment will remain in the breasts of any one of you."

The simplicity and straightforwardness of this address went home to the hearts of its hearers, chiefly, perhaps, because the majority of them were themselves simple and straightforward. The reflection would have occurred to a more sophisticated community that a reference to the agreement itself would at any time put the captain in possession of the information of which he had so chivalrously declined to avail himself; but this idea presented itself neither to him nor them. A round of cheers arose from the crowd

as the captain took off his cap. It was a thing he rarely did, except at prayers, and was significant of his being about to make an important communication. "The first act of my new command," he said, "is to reinstate my friends and yours" (here he pointed to the officers who stood around him, and who, by their abstinence from voting, had tacitly shown their acquiescence in the government of their chief) "in the same positions of authority which they have hitherto respectively occupied. Your vote of this evening evidently approves their re-appointment, and you will obey them, I feel sure, as cheerfully as you will obey me."

Another hearty round of cheering here greeted the speaker; his allusion to their evident wishes (though it was probable they were unconscious of having entertained them) gratified them hugely; and, moreover, with one exception, they were well satisfied with their officers.

As the captain looked round on the circle of approving faces, he perceived that enthusiasm for the new order of things had reached its acme, and that the moment had arrived for the crucial test of the obedience of his voluntary subjects. "The first order I have to give you men will, I know, be an unpopular one," he said, in a low but decisive tone; "but when I tell you that in my opinion it is absolutely necessary, not only for the maintenance of that authority you have just ratified, but for the safety of our lives, you will understand that it must be executed at once, and without a murmur. In the beautiful climate in which Providence has pleased to place us, it may be for the remainder of our days, strong drinks of any kind will be only necessary to us as a medicine. One of those liquor casks yonder will therefore be placed in the custody of Mr. Doyle. The rest you will break up at once, and in my presence."

An ominous silence ensued upon this mandate, followed by a murmur of unmistakable dissent.

"Do you hear me?" continued the captain, in a voice at least as ominous; it was like the growl of a lion aroused from sleep. "I must have those spirit casks broken up."

At first not a man stirred from his place; then out from the throng marched Matthew Murdoch. The effects of liquor were still very discernible in him, though he knew, as the saying is, "what he was about;" there was less of audacity in his manner than there had been an hour ago, and he exchanged a word or two with those about him—an appeal, no doubt, for their moral support, which was presumably accorded to him—before he once more confronted the captain; his air, though impudent enough, was not so defiant as heretofore; and there was something of remonstrance, mingled with rebellion, in his husky tones.

"Look here, captain; right is right, but reason is reason——"

"Stop!" roared the captain, in a terrible voice, and looking round him with eyes from which all shrank on whom they fell. "Is this drunken dog, my men, your spokesman?" he inquired incredulously.

Not a sound was heard save the breeze in the trees and the lapping of the sea upon the sand; then, after a pause, two replies broke forth, "Yes, he be."

"Come out and join him, then, you skulking curs,"

Then Mellor and Rudge came out in a shamefaced manner, and ranged themselves beside their ally.

"Are there any more?"

The wind and the sea alone made answer. The moment, it was felt by all, was a supreme one, though few pictured to themselves its immense importance; the ladies, whom it concerned most of all, the least.

Aunt Sophia, indeed, was dumb with fear; she felt that matters were in a state of tension, which could only be relieved by some act of despotic authority upon the one hand, or of lawless violence upon the other, but her alarm arose from that mere shrinking from the appeal to physical

force which belongs to woman's nature; she thought neither of consequences nor of the opposing forces—the ignoble and the heroic—which composed the spectacle before her, and whose collision, like that of two thunder-clouds, was about to evoke an explosion.

For Edith, on the other hand, the scene had a dramatic interest, so powerful and absorbing that it left no room for apprehension. She had not believed that any incident of the life that was left to her could have so moved her. The reason of this, though she was unaware of the fact, was its absolute novelty. Her capacity for emotion had not, as she imagined, been destroyed; her sympathies were as quick and tender as ever, but they could no longer be approached by the old road. No by-play of the drama escaped her. She noted the attitude of the captain, a statue of wrought-iron; his firm-set lips that repressed the pent-up fire within, and the eyes that betrayed it. She marked the ungainly but significant pose of the mutineer; his giant arm advanced to accentuate his words, his huge hand trembling with hate and fear and liquor, and with every now and then a glance over his shoulder, as if to make sure of the presence of his supporters.

Warned by the continued silence that speech was expected of him, he resumed his remonstrance. "Reason is reason, says I, and it stands to reason that being our own masters with plenty of leisure and victuals, that we should no longer labour but enjoy ourselves. What we men wants——"

"You mean *you* men, you three," interrupted the captain.

"Nay, it's what we *all* wants, only all have not the pluck of Matthew Murdoch to say it; we wants, since we are ashore, to taste the sweets of plenty. Now, there is nothing so sweet in life—save a lass—as good liquor; and as to destroying all them casks, I tell you straight out it shan't be done."

As he ended he touched, perhaps by accident, or to emphasize his argument, with his projected finger his commander's arm, which instantly, as if some powerful spring had released it, struck out from the shoulder like a catapult, and levelled him on the sand. There he lay, like an ox in the shambles, and almost as huge, bleeding from the slaughterer's axe, for the other's fist had caught him in the jaw, and had knocked out a tooth or two.

"When that mutinous dog comes to himself," thundered the captain, with a look of contempt at the prostrate hulk before him, "put him in irons. And now, my men, break up those spirit casks, and be quick about it."

Both orders were obeyed without a murmur; the irons used in punishment had, as it happened, been brought from the *Ganges*, with the other resources of civilization, and were presently fitted to Murdoch's huge form by the carpenter, who was also sergeant-at-arms; while the men, in gangs, each under an officer, proceeded at once to break in the heads of the spirit casks, and empty their contents upon the sand.

It was not one of those 'moral victories' of which so much is often made by the party which, according to the poor evidence of the senses, has unquestionably been beaten, but a substantial triumph of authority. Not until all was over was it fully understood by those most interested in the struggle (and even then only by a vague sense of relief) how doubtful had been the issue; if Murdoch had not laid his finger on the captain, the opportunity might have been wanting which had brought the "skirts of happy chance" within his grasp, but as it happened that one knock-down blow had re-established his supremacy.

Aunt Sophia had been a little shocked by it; the appeal to brute force—notwithstanding the acknowledged admiration of the fair sex for the display of physical strength—had jarred upon her gentle nature.

"Do you not think, Edith," she said, as they returned

to their tent under the young midshipman's escort, "that it would be a gracious and proper thing in us to ask the captain to pardon that poor man?"

"I am not sure," was the quiet reply. "I bear, of course, no more ill-will against him than you do, but I should like to think about it a little before joining in such a request."

"I wonder who it was that was put forward as the opposition candidate to the captain," observed Aunt Sophia, presently.

"He particularly said that he did not want to know," remarked Edith, with a half-smile.

"Quite right and very proper in him, my dear," replied the elder lady; "but, then, I *do* want to know. Mr. Conolly, I see *you* know; come, tell us all about it?"

The unfortunate youth looked not a little embarrassed; if he could have got away from Aunt Sophia he would probably have done so, and parleyed with her from a distance, but her ample arm was hooked to his. He cast a glance of distress at Edith that seemed to say, "Pray observe that it is not *my* fault; I am obliged to tell her," ere he replied to her question.

"I believe, Miss Norbury, that the other candidate for the men's suffrages was Mr. Bates. He had only a very small following; but that fellow Murdoch and the two others, Rudge and Mellor, were among them. It was in my opinion the worst choice they could have made," added the young fellow, still glancing furtively at Edith's face, which had suddenly grown very grave and pale.

"Mr. Bates is not a favourite of mine I'm sure," observed Aunt Sophia, "but we must remember, Mr. Conolly, it was not his fault that he was put in nomination. As our good captain says, let bygones be bygones; and don't you agree with me that it would be, so to speak, a pretty thing in dear Edith and myself, as well as acceptable to his friends, to get this poor man off his punishment."

Master Conolly twiddled his cap, and hesitated, with his eyes fixed interrogatively on the younger lady.

"Of course, Murdoch will be glad to avail himself of your kind intercession," he said, "but knowing the ill-conditioned set of fellows to which he belongs, I doubt whether they will like you a bit the better for it."

"Moreover," put in Edith, with sharp decision, "I was once told by one very dear to me, and who was kindness itself, that it was always a mistake to attempt to conciliate the base and cruel, since it only makes them think you are afraid of them; and as I am not afraid either of Mr. Bates or his followers, any interference of mine on their behalf would produce a false impression."

It was the first time that of her own free will Edith had referred to her lost lover, even indirectly, since his death; and it was destined to be the last. Conolly, of course, understood the reason of her bitterness against Mr. Bates, but not so Aunt Sophia, who had never been made the confidant of his conduct at Simon's Bay. She only understood that her proposal for interfering with the course of justice on behalf of Matthew Murdoch had, like himself, been knocked on the head.

CHAPTER XX.

THE EXPLORATION.

To any one who doubted of the necessity of there being a supreme head to the little band of exiles, a proof was evident on the very next morning, which showed the reef without the wreck; every vestige of the unfortunate *Ganges* had disappeared, and but for the captain's urgency in getting her emptied while wind and wave permitted, many an article of comfort for which the term "worth its weight

in gold" would indeed have been an inadequate expression, would have been lost with her. Violent as must have been the storm that thus took away all trace of her, little of it was felt within the land-locked harbour, while in 'Ladies' Bay,' as the spot in which its tenants were located was called, was only heard that muffled roar, which dwellers in London associate with distant traffic, and which like a lullaby soothes their slumbers. As Aunt Sophia and Edith looked to seaward and saw no vestige of the object to which they had always been wont to first turn their eyes, they could hardly believe the evidence of their senses. Its disappearance had a very different, and even opposite, effect upon them, a fact of which both were conscious; the one was full of regrets, the other well content with what had happened; yet each for love's sake sympathized with the other, and embraced her without a word.

The morning, though somewhat fresher than its fore-runners had been, was fine and bright, and the island had never looked so beautiful. Mr. Marston called upon the ladies early to inform them it was the captain's orders that a more commodious residence was that day to take the place of their tent, and to propose that while it was being run up, they should spend the day in exploring their place of exile. The superintendence of himself and his chief would be required in getting things ship-shape and in order in the larger bay, but the services of the second mate, Mr. Redmayne, and also those of Mr. Conolly would be placed at their disposal. A couple of men would also be told off to carry their provisions, as well as to aid them in other respects; the hills into which the island was broken being very steep, and progress, by reason of the luxuriance of vegetation, by no means easy.

This proposal was accepted with alacrity. The ladies were very willing to emerge from the narrow limits of their present place of residence, and eager to explore the place that was in all probability to be their future home. A

hasty survey of it, to make sure that it contained no other inhabitants but themselves, had been made on the first morning by some members of the crew, but with that exception it was virgin ground. It was quite possible that the expedition they were about to make would be the first that had been undertaken in the island, a flowery wilderness whose beauties had perhaps never before gladdened the eye of man.

To Edith the prospect afforded even a greater satisfaction than to Aunt Sophia, who remarked with some surprise the pleasure that shone in her niece's face, in welcoming their escort ; she set it down to the enjoyment which she promised herself in the society of Mr. Redmayne, a very handsome and agreeable fellow. It was early days, of course, for Edith to be thinking seriously of any other man as a successor to her dead lover, but human nature was human nature, and it was only reasonable that she should appreciate the respectful and delicate attention paid her by the young officer ; after all, it was only a question of time and opportunity when the widowed heart of the young girl would seek consolation elsewhere, and in no circumstances could opportunity be more favourable than in the present. So reasoned Aunt Sophia, not without a sigh, however, for the mutability of female affection, and a secret and complacent conviction that had the case been hers she would have proved more faithful, or, at all events, less precipitate in transferring her allegiance. As a matter of fact, except so far as courtesy demanded, Edith gave no thought either to Mr. Redmayne or his attentions. Her pleasure, such as it was, arose from a precisely opposite cause, namely, from the utter novelty of the situation, which prevented her thoughts from dwelling upon the love, which for her meant loss of all, and had no sort of association with it.

Except youth and good looks Mr. Redmayne and Charles Layton had little in common ; but what similarity existed between them so far from attracting her towards the

young officer, had the reverse effect. If any comparison ever suggested itself to her mind, he suffered by the contrast. She freely acknowledged his good points, and was grateful to him for his politeness and good will; but to have set him side by side with her Charley would have been cruel to the one, and little short of blasphemous as regarded the other. Her position was that of an epicure, who is offered home-made Curaçoa, and who, while admitting it to be good of its kind, declines to admit the least comparison with the original.

The case of young Conolly, whom not even Aunt Sophia could credit with any serious intentions, was altogether different. His society was always welcome to Edith, not on account of his obvious devotion to her, with which, indeed, if she had understood its depth, she would perhaps even have been displeased, but because he had been a favourite with Charley. She never spoke of her lover to the young midshipman, but her eyes often filled with tenderness as she looked at the boy, who with the egotism of his age, imagined, no doubt, that she was not wholly indifferent to him upon his own account. The rules of seniority had not always given him satisfaction, but on the present occasion he was well pleased that they gave Aunt Sophia to the custody of the second mate, and left Edith to his particular care. In neither case was the charge a sinecure.

The island was of small extent—not more than twelve miles in circumference—but of most unequal formation; except the sandy bays that fringed it, there was hardly a level spot to be found upon it; it consisted of mountains and valleys, or rather of hills and dells, covered with the richest vegetation, and bright with the foliage of perpetual spring. The air, which, though warm, was fresh and invigorating, was laden with the perfume of ten thousand flowers; the trees that clothed the hills themselves bore blossoms of the most brilliant hue, while the climbing

plants which encircled their trunks, or which rooted in the shelving rocks, hung in rich festoons from the edge of every precipice, gave the idea of an eternal festival of nature.

In the miniature defiles formed by the hills, this splendour of bud and bloom reached its acme; the turf, watered by clear streams, was enamelled by flowers of such bright and varied hue that, as you approached it, it seemed as though you were about to tread on a carpet formed of precious stones. The blaze of colour would have been oppressive, but for the shadowy roof of the huge trees, which projected themselves on either side, and for the refreshing glimpses of the sea that were offered through their interlacing boughs.

Through this wilderness of beauty there was, of course, no pathway; but the very difficulty of progress enhanced its pleasure. When a wild rose entangles our feet, it may seem as inconvenient as a common bramble, but the roses of this Eden had no thorns. The creepers that hung from rock and tree were, however, so numerous that it was impossible to escape their bonds; the wayfarers were caught, as it were, in chaplets. On the other hand these assisted them in their ascents and descents; they swung themselves up and down by ropes of flowers. Nothing that the imagination can conceive could be more wondrous than the spectacle of all this lavish beauty. It kept even the midshipman silent.

Upon the summit of the second hill, where the Union Jack was flying, because it was the highest point of the island, the whole party halted as if by common consent. The view from this spot was panoramic, and less obstructed than elsewhere by trees. Upon all sides save one glittered the silver sea, without a break in its far-stretching splendour; on the north there were two groups of islands apparently about equi-distant from them, and from one another.

"Is it possible," murmured Aunt Sophia, carried out of her ordinary plane of thought by the entrancing scene, "that our eyes are the first to behold all this?"

" 'Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air,' "

remarked Mr. Redmayne, with the complacency of one who makes an apt quotation. Nevertheless it fell flat. Edith remembered Johnson's depreciatory remarks upon 'the Elegy,' and for the first time agreed with him. The situation was indeed too poetic for so didactic an illustration.

"It does not give me the notion of waste so much as of inexhaustible superabundance," she remarked.

"Just so," returned the other, with eager agreement, "and a very pleasant notion, too. 'Surplusage is no error.'" To this second quotation there was no reply.

Aunt Sophia felt for Mr. Redmayne; it was clear to her that if left to carry on the conversation with Edith single-handed, it would not conduce to his interest as regarded the effacement of her former lover. She struck in therefore to the rescue. "I am not quite sure, Edie, whether the presence of these islands adds a charm to the prospect, or the reverse. What do *you* think?"

"I think that they would be better away," was the decisive reply. She did not give her reason. The fact was that they gave a vague impression of continuity, of some connection with that world without, which she wished to have seen the last of, and to have done with.

"A very just expression," observed the second mate, "they would be *much* better away."

"Why so?" inquired Aunt Sophia; she knew that there was danger to her plans in drawing him out, but her curiosity was too strong for her.

"Because though we know there are no savages on *this* island, we cannot be so sure of that as regards its neighbours."

"Good heavens!" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, "I understood the captain to say they were uninhabited."

"He hopes and believes they are so; but time alone can show it. It is sometimes a question with persons in our position, whether even foes are not better than no fellow-creatures at all, but that is not our case, at all events, for the present."

"You mean that even foes may save us from starvation," observed Edith, "in case the island does not prove to be self-supporting?" Mr. Redmayne nodded. The subject was evidently a serious one with him, and, indeed, it had much occupied the thoughts of the captain and his officers.

"Beg pardon, miss," said one of the sailors, breaking a rather uncomfortable silence, "but we found these pears and apples as we come along, very, what you was pleased to call, self-supporting."

"Pears and apples! You don't mean to tell me that you have been eating those great brown and red fruits," exclaimed the officer, angrily, "that hung on the trees?"

"Well, yes, sir; my mate and me we finished up a goodish lot of them on the road," said the man.

"Good heavens! this may be very serious," muttered Mr. Redmayne, in a tone of great concern.

"We thought they was public property, like," explained the sailor, apologetically.

"It is not *that*, my man," observed the officer, smiling in spite of himself; "but you don't know what mischief you may not have done to yourselves. One of the first tasks Mr. Doyle has set himself to do," he added, turning to the ladies, "is to analyze the island fruits with a view to ascertaining their fitness for human food."

"They are not immediately fatal to life, sir," remarked Conolly, drily, but with an air of great respect. "The fact is we ate half a dozen of them apiece at mess last night."

"The deuce you did; that only shows, however, that they do not kill midshipmen."

Despite that injurious remark, this news of the experiment having been tried, on however vile a body, gave the speaker great satisfaction.

"If this be so, ladies," he added, cheerfully, "then one of our gravest causes for anxiety is removed; with fruit and fish—for I take it for granted we shall find some means of catching fish—we need have at least no fear of want."

"Then, sooner or later, some one is sure to find us," put in Aunt Sophia, "that is, of course" (with a glance at those specks in the distance), "I mean some European ship."

"Let us hope so," said Mr. Redmayne gently, "though if the worst came to the worst, and we were left to one another's society for ever"—(here he blushed and stammered)—"I mean if we were exiles for life in this beautiful spot, it would not be so intolerable." He cast a glance at Edith as he ended this little speech, but she took no notice of it, and turned to the young midshipman.

"What do *you* say, Mr. Conolly?"

"I could be very happy here," he answered simply, "but I should like to see my mother again."

"A very proper reply," said Edith, with a smile followed by a little sigh. "Come, let us go on."

A spirit of thoughtfulness, if not of gloom, had fallen upon the little party, and with a view to recover their spirits, Mr. Redmayne proposed lunch; the meal was spread in the next valley, where the sailors lit a fire, and prepared some tea for the ladies; after which refreshment, Master Conolly was called upon for a song. Our young midshipman had a beautiful voice, and sang at once 'Sweet Home' with great simplicity and sweetness. A silence followed it, more significant than any applause could have been. The rough sailors were as much touched as their superiors, and the hearts of all the audience, save one, seemed to respond with an Amen,

As they turned to leave the spot, the midshipman's quick eye lit upon a white object among the flowers, to which he called Mr. Redmayne's attention. He took it up, and examined the ground about it with great minuteness.

"What new wonder have you discovered?" inquired Aunt Sophia.

"No wonder, madam, but only a piece of information," was the grave reply. "We may now take it for granted that yonder islands are inhabited."

"Why so?"

"Because some weeks—or, perhaps, only some days ago—there has been held, close to where we are now sitting, another feast. Here are the traces of the fire, and here is a fish bone; we must return at once, if you please, and inform the captain."

The news the excursionists brought back with them to Rescue Bay was so important that, not satisfied with their report, Captain Head himself repaired with Mr. Redmayne to the spot where the discovery had been made. That a fire had been lit there was certain, but how long ago it was difficult to guess. In a less genial climate the period might have been extended to months, but so quick was Nature to reassert herself in that marvellous region, that it might only have included as many days. Had the luncheon party been held a little later, indeed, there would have been no evidence of 'previous occupation' at all, except the fish bone, which might itself have got there by other than human means. An osprey, for instance, might have dropped its prey. As things were, however, it was certain that there had been other visitors, and that but lately, on the island than those who at present occupied it.

"I am glad it is a *fish* bone," said the captain, who was not without some humour. "It might have been another sort of bone, and proved our neighbours yonder to be cannibals. Even if they be cannibals, however, they will find us a tough lot," he added grimly.

"Not all of us," observed the younger officer significantly.

"Just so; there are two tender morsels you would say, one of whom might tempt even a white man. Well, well," he added kindly, perceiving the young man's look of confusion. "It's natural enough at your age that such matters should enter your thoughts, though if you will take my advice, you will dismiss them. I know the young lady in question, and she is not like other girls, who, having missed their bird with one barrel, is ready to bring down another with a second. In any case, however, this is no time for love-making; our island is like heaven in more respects than one; there will be no marrying or giving in marriage in it for some time to come. In my judgment we shall find it a very tight place."

"You mean we shall not be long left in undisturbed possession of it, sir?"

The captain nodded gravely. "If the *Ganges* had come ashore on the south yonder, it is my opinion we should have seen something of our neighbours before now. As it is, they know less of us than even we know of them; but we may make each other's acquaintance any day."

"At all events, sir, no matter how many they may be, we shall be able to give a good account of them."

"No doubt, if matters should unhappily come to that pass; but all our efforts must be directed to keeping friends with them. If not for our own sake, for the sake of those whom we have in charge, and who are solely dependent upon us, it behoves us, if it be possible, to keep the peace. I look to you, Mr. Redmayne, to impress that necessity on all hands."

"It shall be done, sir."

The captain nodded approvingly; he felt not a little pleased with himself as a diplomate. One of the most difficult things in the case of a ship's crew finding themselves in native company is to keep the men from giving any cause of offence; and he felt that in what he had said

to the second mate, he had offered the strongest inducement for doing his best to maintain amicable relations with their expected visitors.

CHAPTER XXI.

VISITORS.

IF Mr. Redmayne alone nourished a secret passion for Edith, there was no lack of good will and even tenderness both for her and Aunt Sophia among the rest of the castaways. They were, on the whole, good specimens of Englishmen, and, with a few brutal exceptions, understood the silent appeal made to all that was best in them, by the presence of the two defenceless women. It is possible, had the reins of authority fallen into other hands, that the responsibility of what chance had thus imposed, would not have been so loyally acknowledged; but as it was, it was pleasant to note not only the delicate attentions of the officers, but the willing services of the sailors, offered on all occasions to the two ladies as though by hosts to guests.

The very first thought of the captain, as we have seen, had been to improve their place of residence; and in a very few hours, the carpenter and his assistants had made a dwelling-house of wood, in place of the tent, but little inferior in solidity to those scamped and crazy edifices which the enterprising builder now 'runs up' in the suburbs of our metropolis. Its slightness was of no consequence, for not only was the site completely sheltered, but hardly any protection was needed against climatic influences. It required a fire-place only for cooking purposes, and there were no stairs. Construction was thus comparatively easy, but a great deal of solicitude was expended upon its external appearance. Not only about the

ample porch with which it was provided, but over the whole tenement creepers were carefully trained, which sprang up and flourished with such marvellous rapidity that in a very short time the hut of planks resembled a fairy bower. Within, the arrangements were really of a superior kind, everything that had adorned the best cabins, including of course their own, on board the *Ganges*, having been laid under contribution for their new abode. The sitting-room was quite handsomely furnished with mirrors, pictures, and couches, nor was anything wanting to their comfort elsewhere that forethought could supply. Aunt Sophia and Edith were far from belonging to that portion of their sex which take all kindness shown them by the other as a matter of course, or to be overpaid by a frigid smile. Their gentle hearts were touched by it.

On Edith, if such a word can be used of one so naturally sympathetic, it had a very humanizing effect; it made her feel that the terrible misfortune that had happened to her, need not, as she had imagined, cut her off from her kind; the lamp of her inner life had gone out, but still she was not left in darkness; or, rather, her mental vision having got accustomed to what had seemed darkness, she became aware of a light, if of a somewhat dim and twilight kind, which struggled in to her from without. Love of the personal sort was dead within her and buried with her lost one in the deep; but sympathy with her fellow-creatures survived, and made life once more seem worth the living.

As for Aunt Sophia, whose honesty and good sense made her well aware that she had long lost those attractions which are generally associated with her sex, she had no words to express her sense of the consideration and kindness with which she was treated. "In your case, my dear Edith," she said, "it is no wonder with your youth and beauty that you should have such respect paid to you; you appear, no doubt, to this industrious hive like a queen bee, to whom it is impossible to show too much devotion; but

for my part, I have nothing to recommend me but my helplessness."

"It is that and that only, we may be sure," put in Edith quickly, "that makes these brave fellows indulge and spoil us both, as you and I would indulge and spoil a motherless child; and I wish from my heart that we had some means of showing how deeply we feel their tenderness." She thought for a moment, and then added, "I think I have hit on a plan to prove our gratitude, though it can never repay the obligation it imposes on us. It is certain, my dear Sophy, that wholesome as this climate appears to be, there will be more or less of sickness amongst us; accidents, too, it is probable will happen, even if there be not (which Heaven forbid) wounds received in active warfare with our unknown neighbours; in any case some kind of hospital will be necessary. Why should we not fit up our fourth and largest room—for which we ourselves have no real need—as a sick ward, where we may nurse our benefactors in their hour of need?"

At this Aunt Sophia clapped her hands for joy. The proposition was one which suited not only with her feelings, but her capacity, for she was a first-rate nurse. It was necessary to communicate their design to the captain, who after some demur acceded to the proposal: for some days they knew not what leisure meant, but their toil was of the pleasantest kind, since its object was the benefit of others. Under the surgeon's superintendence they selected from the ship's stores everything necessary for their purpose, and with their own fingers pulled enough lint to suffice for the casualties of a general engagement.

That discovery of the fish-bone brought indeed the curse of labour upon all the dwellers in that isle of Eden. Not a moment was lost in putting the encampment, if such a term could be applied to what was no longer a mere assemblage of tents, but which included a wooden hut or two of some pretensions, into a state of defence. A barri-

cade was erected between it and the sea, made by driving a double row of strong posts into the sand, interlaced with the branches of trees. The space between these rows was filled with logs of wood, stone, and sand, to render it solid. On the inside a bank was raised, on which the men could stand and fire if attacked, with an opening left for one of the six-pounders which they had contrived to bring on shore. Two large swivels were also mounted upon rocks, enclosed within the line of fortification, so that they could be pointed in all directions; and the breast-work was continued round 'Ladies' Bay,' right up the cliff foot.

These preparations, intended to inspire confidence, had a directly opposite effect with Aunt Sophia. She already beheld their island home invaded by countless savages, with whom scalping was a pastime, and burning their enemies alive a festive celebration. Henceforth she could never be persuaded by her companion to explore any portion of the island without an escort, and rarely even to set foot outside the barricade.

To Edith, on the contrary, this sense of impending peril was not altogether one of apprehension, and in truth had a certain charm of its own, which was due to its strangeness. Mr. Doyle, who saw much of her at this period, once remarked that Miss Edith had a passion for novelty greater than any he had observed in her sex; but the fact was that she hailed anything that was a distraction to her thoughts, even though it were anxiety itself. It is in this condition of our faculties, fortunately a rare one, that the mind is most accessible to new impressions.

One morning, as the two ladies sat in the porch, Edith with paint-brush in hand, finishing a little water-colour sketch of their rampart she had begun the day before, which Master Conolly had begged of her, and Aunt Sophia reading aloud from Walter Scott, the young midshipman came flying towards them through the passage that connected the two bays. His face was flushed with excitement

more than speed, his eyes sparkled, his voice trembled with the weight of his news, as he exclaimed, "Some one has come at last!"

"Some one!" shrieked Aunt Sophia, dropping 'Quentin Durward' from her lap. "Do you mean the savages?"

He shook his head.

"Great Heaven! Is it an English ship?"

The poor lady's ecstasy was but short-lived, for the lad shook his head again.

At the same time Edith uttered a deep sigh, which he mistook for one of regret.

"I don't know what they are," he said; "come and see with your own eyes."

Edith rose at once to accompany him, and Aunt Sophia, rather than be left by herself, followed her example. As they rounded the rock, a singular spectacle presented itself. The whole ship's company had the attitude of a state of siege. Every man was at the post assigned to him, on the barricade or at the guns, with the exception of three persons—the captain, Mr. Marston, and the Hindoo interpreter, Gideon Ghorst—who were standing on the verge of the sea at a short distance—for it was high tide—the first with a white flag in his hand, the other two each with a branch of a tree, in token of amity. The reason for this strange demonstration was not far to seek. In the harbour, about fifty feet from the shore, were two large canoes kept in a state of rest by their paddles; their construction was most curious and graceful. They were between thirty and forty feet long, hollowed apparently out of a single stem. A balance log at least twenty feet long, was carried by each at the extremity of two immensely long elastic outriggers, the whole presenting the appearance of excessive lightness and buoyancy. From stem to stern the canoes were filled with the most gorgeous flowers, heaped up in such profusion that they almost concealed their tenants. These consisted in each case of

nine persons, whose appearance was so extraordinary that it was little wonder that the midshipman had been unable to classify or describe them. With the exception of one individual, who, like a native of India, wore waistcloth and turban, they were all clothed in dazzling white; their garments, without having the stiffness of the European cut, fitted almost as closely, so as to admit of the freest use of the limbs. Their arms only, and, as was presently seen, their legs below the knee, were bare. Round their foreheads were circlets of red flowers, and also around their waists, which, contrasting with the hue of their attire, shone like crowns and zones of fire. Mr. Redmayne, who had advanced to the ladies backwards for the first time in his life, his eyes being riveted on this amazing scene, handed Aunt Sophia a field-glass.

"What do you make of them, Miss Norbury?" he inquired excitedly.

The lady's scrutiny was long and keen. "I think they are angels," presently she murmured, in awestruck tones, and passed on the glass to Edith.

If grace of form constitute an angel, Aunt Sophia's diagnosis would have been correct. So far as the assisted eye could judge of these strange visitors, they were indeed glorious specimens of humanity. Their colour was a fine bronze, no darker than that of a European who has lived long in a sultry climate; their hair was black, and very luxuriant, though so neatly arranged and confined in braids and plaits that it was difficult to judge of its length. No more feminine appearance was thereby imparted to them, however, than by the fillets worn by our street athletes; their forms—to judge by the two who were standing up and directing the rowers with their hands—were too majestic and suggestive of strength.

Had the castaways been the savages whom they had presupposed their visitors would be, they might well have imagined that those they thus beheld were gods.

Astonishment, however, was by no means confined to one side. The eyes of the new comers ranged over the encampment, the guns, and the little group of men on the shore, with the wildest surprise.

Presently the captain, raising his voice so that it could be heard by both parties, directed the interpreter to address them in Malay, which was immediately done. Thereupon the native with the turban spoke a few hurried words with the man upstanding on his canoe, and then replied, "Who are you, whom we find upon our 'Island of Flowers;' and are you at peace with us or at war?" Then the interpreter, in obedience to the captain's orders, replied that they were unfortunate Englishmen who had lost their ship upon the reef, and that they were their friends.

On this the two leaders interchanged a word or two, and without a moment of hesitation the canoes were paddled to shore. This was done with such rapidity that the captain was unable, as it had been his intention to do, to go into the water to meet them, a sign of confidence and conciliation in such cases. He instantly, however, pressed forward, stretching out his hand to one of the leaders. The latter took it daintily in his palm, and considered it with much attention, the others crowding round with expressions of wonder and delight. They had, as their companion the Malay explained, never seen a white man before, and the blue veins in his hands were what was exciting their surprise.

The captain on this rolled up his sleeve to let them see that this specialty was not only local, whereupon they showed him their own arms, which were, in their turn, also peculiar, being tattooed from the wrist to the shoulder, with every description of flowers. One of the two leaders had evidently a superiority over his fellow, for which it was difficult to account; his manner was less dignified, and his curiosity and wonder more openly expressed; and on seeing the captain button his waistcoat, which happened

to have come undone, he burst into a musical laugh, which was instantly echoed by the rest. His face was the most good-natured, though without weakness, it is possible to imagine, and his gentle and unsuspecting manners were those of a child. This personage, as the Malay, who could speak a little English, gave them to understand, was Masiric, brother of King Taril, who ruled the neighbouring island.

At a word from the captain, the rest of the officers came out of the encampment to be introduced to the visitors. They naturally held out their hands, which however the others declined, their curiosity in that direction having been sufficiently gratified. On being informed, however, that shaking hands was a proof of friendship, they entered upon that exercise with great enthusiasm, nor could they be easily induced to leave it off. It being breakfast-time, some tea and sweet biscuits were brought down for the strangers, who partook of the beverage with seeming enjoyment; nor was it discovered till long after that they thought it the nastiest that had ever passed their lips. In every movement, look, and word, they were in short the pink of courtesies, and the most cordial relations were at once established between the two parties.

As they sat upon the ground at their repast, Edith's curiosity to get a nearer view of them induced her, in company with Mr. Redmayne, to approach the group. No sooner did they catch sight of her than all with one accord uttered a cry of joy mingled with awe, and leaping to their feet rushed away to their canoes. From thence they presently returned, laden with flowers, and advancing towards her with every demonstration of respect, heaped them up at her feet, and then prostrated themselves on the sand.

"What shall I say to them?" she inquired eagerly of the interpreter. "What is it they take me for?"

"They worship flowers," explained the Malay, "and they take you for their goddess."

“And a very natural error to fall into, too,” said Mr. Redmayne, under his breath.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE SONG.

It falls to the lot of very few of us to be worshipped even metaphorically; and Edith Norbury's position seemed to her a sufficiently embarrassing one; but the fact was that under the circumstances she could hardly have gone wrong in whatever she did. Persons of the blood royal find it very easy to satisfy the requirements of their “obedient humble servants,” and a Divinity has of course still less difficulty in such matters. It was natural to Edith to smile and look pleasant, and in so doing she fulfilled all that was expected of her. Moreover, as it so happened, these good people were in the most admirable cue for unquestioning devotion. Deep hid in the ‘Isle of Flowers,’ which it seemed was its native designation, was a rude altar, to which at certain seasons, of which this was one, these children of nature came to pay their vows. Their offerings they had brought with them, and finding, as they imagined, the goddess in person to receive them, it seemed superfluous to seek her shrine. The situation had that sort of sublimity about it which is only one step removed from the ridiculous; had Edith been a man, for example, and one of the captain's build, his appearance with so much floral decoration would have suggested to the irreverent and European mind a Jack-in-the-green; as it was, being a woman, and a very pretty one, she seemed, as she stood knee-deep in bud and blossom, even to her own countrymen, as at least a charming Queen of the May, and their evident admiration assisted the impression produced upon the visitors.

Even Mr. Bates was pleased, because, as he explained to one of his henchmen, if these people didn't know a girl from a goddess, it was plain that they must be simple indeed, and that if the young woman only played her cards decently well she could get anything she wanted out of them, which would be to the benefit of the whole community. That she should hesitate to take advantage of their ignorance never entered into his mind, and indeed for the present it was difficult, and, as the Malay suggested, would be exceedingly injudicious, to do otherwise. Edith herself was tortured with scruples; the position thus involuntarily thrust upon her was not only like that of the Lady of Burleigh, "the burthen of an honour to which she was not born," and for which she felt wholly unfitted, but seemed also to savour of impiety. Aunt Sophia, however, joined with the captain in advising her at least to be silent. Perhaps she felt a secret pride in finding so near a relative promoted, though by mistake, to such an immense elevation, while at the same time she experienced a little natural jealousy at having no share of these celestial honours. "They will very soon find out, my dear Edith, without your telling them, that you are no goddess," was her naïve reply to her niece's scruples. At this Edith smiled—dispensed, as it seemed to them, one more ray to her enraptured worshippers—and withdrew as 'divinely' as she could to 'Ladies' Bay,' followed by Master Conolly laden with her floral tributes; just as some prima donna, who on returning from a scene in which she has been overwhelmed by public favour, is obliged to call in assistance to carry her bouquets.

While the visitors were being shown over the encampment, every object of which awakened in them a new world of thought, the Malay in the intervals of interpretation told the captain what he knew of their new friends. He himself—according to his own account, one of the best and most trustworthy of mankind—had met, as good men

do, with great misfortunes. On a voyage from Canton to Amboyna his vessel had been driven far out of her course, and been ten months ago wrecked on the neighbouring island, which was called Breda. Not a soul had been saved except himself; but the people had proved very kind to him, as no doubt they would prove to the captain and his crew. So far, however, from being effeminate, as they might appear, the natives of Breda were a very powerful and warlike race, which they had need to be, since on its sister island, Amrac, there dwelt a savage and cruel people, with whom they were always at war. The island on which they now were, named Faybur (or Isle of Flowers), unclaimed by either and common to both, was seldom visited by the inhabitants of Breda, except, as on the present occasion, for devotional purposes, and by those of Amrac (who worshipped nothing) still more rarely. As to the possibilities of rescue, it was the Malay's opinion that the *Ganges* was the first European ship that had ever sailed these seas; on Faybur he had been given to understand that there were no trees fit for the construction of canoes, much more of any larger vessel; and even in Breda the timber, though extraordinarily light and buoyant, was of a very perishable nature.

This news had some satisfaction, but more of discouragement in it. It was probable that, from their present visitors and their friends, no evil was to be apprehended; but there was no knowing what changes might arise from their common enemies on the other island; while it seemed only too likely that where they were there they must be content to remain for the rest of their natural lives. The captain himself had no family ties, nor was his mind much given to sentiment; but this decree (for such it must needs prove, if the information of the Malay was correct) of perpetual separation from all that was familiar affected him not a little. He felt, too—for his heart was kind—for those of his people who had wives and children, whose

faces they were never to see more, and whose homes would be worse than desolate, because haunted by false hopes of their return. His pity was especially claimed by the two women (so unfitted by their bringing up to face such a calamity), whom Fate had committed to his charge, and for whose future, so full of peril, he had become responsible. To make arrangements beyond the passing hour for them was impossible; truly, indeed, could it be said of them that they could not know what a day might bring forth. Not even the present could be relied upon, since for the captain—who had the prejudices, or perhaps it would be fairer to say the experience, of his class—the very name of Malay was a symbol of bad faith. He had to take his description of the state of affairs for granted, not because he trusted in the man's word, but because there was no evidence to be procured from any other source.

A circumstance at this moment occurred, which, to say the least of it, did not tend to increase his confidence in the go-between in question. The captain had besought him, in a few earnest words, on introducing the new arrivals into the camp, to say nothing of the nature of its armament; to keep their visitors in ignorance of the existence of that last resource of civilization—powder and shot—was of the utmost importance; and everything connected with fire-arms had been carefully put out of sight except the cannon, which could not be well disposed of, but whose presence could easily be explained to such simple inquirers on the ground of decoration. Where all was novel, a brace of swivels, and another of six-pounders would excite neither more nor less of curiosity than other objects the uses of which would be equally unintelligible to them; and so, indeed, it had turned out. The visitors had made the circuit of the camp, and gorged with undigested information as any young gentleman who goes up for a competitive examination at Burlington House, were about, with many signs of friendly satisfaction, to return to their

canoe, when one of them discovered upon the sand a bullet. This object carelessly dropped and as carelessly left where it fell, or perhaps too small to attract an eye less keen than that of a savage, at once riveted his attention. The weight of it as contrasted with its minuteness awakened his wonder, and he instantly turned to the Malay for a solution of the phenomenon. The explanation was short and swift, and seemed sufficient, for the native pushed his inquiries no farther; but, on the other hand, he hid the bullet in his robe, as the captain shrewdly suspected, for further investigation and inquiry. The Malay, had he chosen to do so, might have put an end to all discussion on the matter, by affecting to treat it as of no importance, and returning the bullet to its proper owner or even throwing it into the sea. It was evident he had wits and presence of mind enough to have adopted this course, had he been so inclined; and the fact that he had not done so was full of sinister significance. The possession of this little object would give him the key to a secret which he would have been otherwise unable to render intelligible to his companions. To reproach him with any such design was, however, out of the question; not to quarrel with him and through him to conciliate the others as much as possible, was the only course open to the castaways.

It was, then, with a heavy heart that the captain saw his visitors about to depart. On the one hand, it was a matter of great convenience, and one which did away with much necessary misconception, that an interpreter between the two parties had been found; on the other, it placed in what might prove to be unworthy, or even hostile hands, a vast and irresponsible power. It was to be hoped, indeed, of a people apparently so genial and good-natured, that they would draw favourable conclusions for themselves of their new neighbours, but it was certain that their judgment was liable to be warped and perverted by the only personage who was in a position to speak with know-

ledge, and whose interests might prompt him to misrepresentation.

A present of some kind was given to each visitor, nor was the Malay himself forgotten. Indeed, the captain showed no little diplomacy in giving him one of precisely the same kind that was assigned to Prince Masiric, by which he wished not only to please its recipient but to arouse some jealousy in the breast of his Royal Highness. Gifts, too, of various kinds, were forwarded to King Taril—a present of tea (which his Majesty, as it was afterwards discovered, took in pinches raw, in preference to the usual decoction), a jar of sugar-candy, a pound of the sweet biscuits which had given such pleasure to his subjects, and several yards of scarlet cloth.

Laden with these treasures, and delighted with their amazing experiences, the visitors were stepping into their vessels, when from the 'Ladies' Bay' the voice of Master Conolly singing a Scotch song was borne upon the evening breeze. The effect upon his native audience was most remarkable. No exclamation of pleasure broke as before from their lips, but "the hushed amaze of hand and eye" testified to their delight and wonder. Then, with ineffable softness, so as not to interrupt the strain, the word 'Deltis' passed from one to the other. The captain would have inquired of the Malay what this meant, but Masiric held up his finger for silence. A strange picture, indeed, in that exquisite frame of Nature's handiwork, was this band of enraptured savages, listening as though to a voice from heaven (and in truth it lacked neither sweetness nor pathos) to the song of the unseen lad:—

"Hame, hame, hame, oh hame fain wad I be,
Oh hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!
When the flower is in the bud, and the leaf is on the tree,
The lark shall sing me hame to my ain countrie!
Hame, hame, hame, oh hame fain would I be,
Oh hame, hame, hame, to my ain countrie!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

A VOLUNTARY EXIT.

Not till the song had ceased did the attention of the visitors relax for one instant, and with its last note an answering thrill seemed to pervade their giant frames. In Breda, explained the Malay, singing was utterly unknown; nor did even any bird sing, save one they called the Deltis, which had a flute-like note, not unlike that of the young midshipman, and which, visiting them only at rare intervals, was held in a manner sacred. Masiric could not be persuaded that what he had heard was a melody produced by the human voice, so the captain ordered Conolly to be sent for, to give in their presence another specimen of his powers. As a rule, midshipmen are not shy, and fortunately he was no exception to the rule, or the task might well have proved embarrassing. Moreover, not knowing what a sensation he had made already, he had no idea how much was expected of him. But whether by accident or design, he selected a song of a very different kind from its predecessor, 'Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled,' which he gave with a great deal of vigour and feeling. The effect was even more striking than that of his previous effort, for the visitors as if roused to frenzy by the stirring strains, flew to their canoes, and snatching from them each a club—weapons they had hitherto kept concealed—performed a sort of war dance in rhythmic measure. A more complete triumph was never achieved by singer; nor, on the other hand, did ever success exact so severe a penalty.

There was a hurried conversation with the Malay, and then, on behalf of the visitors, he besought, as the greatest favour and strongest mark of friendship that could be shown them, that the young midshipman should be allowed to accompany them to Breda. The captain stood irresolute; there might be great advantage in such an arrangement

for the ship's company, but there was also danger to the envoy. "He shall not go unless he wishes it himself," was the resolution arrived at, as he watched the colour come and go in the young fellow's cheek. Then he took him aside and spoke with him. "If you shrink from this undertaking, as well you may, my lad," he said kindly, "do not hesitate to say so; it may, no doubt, be of great benefit to us, if by your singing you please the king as you have pleased his people; but there is much risk in it, and you have a mother at home to whom I am accountable for your safety, and of whom it behoves us both to think."

"I will go, sir; but I should like to wish good-bye first to Miss Edith Norbury," was the lad's simply reply

Under other circumstances, such a request would certainly have provoked some ridicule from one so little given to sentiment as his commander, in whose eyes Master Lewis Conolly did not seem to have long emerged from the nursery. As things were, however, and considering the nature of the venture the boy was willing to make, his very youth gave seriousness to his appeal. As the captain was about to give him the desired permission, Edith herself made her appearance from 'Ladies' Bay.' The news had already reached her of what had been proposed, and in an agony of apprehension for the lad's safety, she had determined—reluctant as she was to interfere with the dispositions of authority—to make her protest.

Her presence, as it happened, was welcome neither to her *protégé* nor to the captain. The former would have fain made his farewell out of sight of prying eyes; the latter was chagrined that she should have thus run the risk of cheapening herself by a second appearance before those on whom she had made so marvellous an impression. The mischief, however, if mischief it were, was done. With rapid step, flushed cheek, and eager eye, Edith came down to the shore, and as she did so, the visitors, as before, prostrated themselves on the sand. Of them she took no

notice (an undesigned piece of diplomacy which probably increased her reputation with them), but addressed herself at once to the captain.

"Is it possible, Captain Head, that you are about to send this fatherless boy among a strange and it may be a barbarous people, without a single friend, or the means of making one, on the possible chance of benefit to those he leaves behind him? Let two of them—for I am speaking for my relative as well as for myself—the two on whom if evil falls will suffer the most from it, entreat of you to make no such sacrifice of a brave boy for our poor sakes; we are women, but we are not such cowards as to wish to be saved from danger at that cost." She spoke with exceeding earnestness and passion; her theme not only elevated her usual style, but seemed to inspire her very frame with a dignity hitherto unknown to it. The visitors uttered a low cry of awe and deprecation at the sight of the ire of their goddess.

"Madam," replied the captain quietly, "you do me wrong. This boy, as he will tell you, has received no orders from me to comply with our visitors' request. On the contrary, I have reminded him that he has a mother at home who, should we ever, God willing, return to our native land, will ask me, 'Where is my son?' and woe be to me if I have to answer 'His blood is on my hands.' But if he himself is willing——"

"Oh, shame upon you!" interrupted the girl with vehémençe, "you mean if he himself is brave enough to lose his young life for our sakes, why should we hesitate to take advantage of so much simplicity and courage?"

The captain bit his lips and was silent.

He was one of those men whose nature invincible by fire and sword, shrinks from the sharpness of a woman's tongue.

"The captain is quite right, Miss Edith," said the young midshipman softly; "he has placed no compulsion

on me of any kind ; but he has offered me an opportunity of distinguishing myself such as falls to the lot of few men of my age"—it was with difficulty Edith here repressed a smile, in which, however, it would have been cruel indeed to have indulged—"and I am fully resolved to embrace it ; I shall come back again, safe and sound, no doubt, but if I do not, you will think of me as having done my duty, and—and—not forget me "

The tears rushed to Edith's eyes, but remembering in whose presence she stood, and how important it was that she should exhibit no sign of weakness, she restrained them. She turned to the captain with an interrogating glance, but he shook his head. "I will say neither yes nor no, madam, in this matter ; it never was one of discipline or duty, and I wash my hands of it. You must just settle it your own way."

"The wind is rising," said the Malay impatiently to Gideon Ghorst, "and our canoes are unfitted for rough weather ; we are anxious to be off, and my people here hope that nothing has occurred to prevent the fulfilment of your promise as regards this young gentleman."

As he spoke, he threw at Conolly a glance of unmistakable disfavour, which did not escape the captain's attention. "There has been no promise," he answered coldly, when this speech was translated to him. "Now, madam, it is for you to decide."

There is nothing so popular with the crowd as an occasional self-abnegation of authority, and this deference on the part of their chief to Edith's opinion was extremely well received by the ship's company. They quite understood the affair to be one out of the ordinary course, and to be settled by no ordinary rules. As for the visitors, Edith's decision had only to be explained to them to be unhesitatingly accepted as law.

"The issue, Captain Head, which you have placed in my feeble hands," she answered modestly, but in tones so

distinct that all around her could hear, "is, I feel, far too momentous for them to deal with. I do not, however, shrink from the responsibility you have imposed upon me. Let Mr. Conolly go, since he wishes it; but not utterly friendless, or without the means of communicating with his fellow-countrymen. Let our own interpreter be his companion; as he is the only medium of intercourse between us and our neighbours, they will prize him for their own sakes; and since whenever they visit us they must needs bring him with them, we shall always learn how our young envoy fares." This proposal was received by the whole ship's company with three ringing cheers, for while it possessed all the advantages for which they hoped for themselves, it mitigated the circumstances of the volunteer exile, whose youth appealed to every heart, and for whom almost every one felt both gratitude and pity.

To the Malay, however, the suggestion was very far from welcome. "The canoes are light," he murmured in broken English, "and already overladen."

"Our men need not go in the same canoe," returned the captain drily, "so no more risk will be run by one than the other. You will take both men or none—that is my last word."

Some discussion followed between the Malay and his friends, whom he was obviously endeavouring to win over to his own views; but it was put an end to by the presence of mind of Edith, who addressing the Prince Masiric by his own name (a circumstance which caused his royal knees to knock together), pointed with outstretched finger first to the midshipman and then to the interpreter, a gesture that was instantly understood and its command complied with. In less than a minute the whole party, with its two additions, were afloat, and the canoes began to glide with amazing swiftness towards the harbour-mouth. The young midshipman was in the second of them, and kept his eye fixed upon the "lessening shore" with pathetic

persistence. He was hardly more than a child in years, and such a parting would have been a sufficiently trying one to even the most seasoned sailor ; indeed, there were others beside Edith and Aunt Sophia to whose eyes tears forced their way as they beheld the last of him, but the lad himself betrayed no symptom of weakness. When the full-voiced adieu involuntarily arose from the shore, conveying the good wishes of those he was probably about to leave for ever, he had even the spirit to reply to it in a characteristic manner by singing a verse from 'The Farewell to Ayrshire' :—

“Friends, that parting tear reserve it,
Though 'tis doubly dear to me ;
Could I think I did deserve it
How much happier should I be”—

an appropriate reply enough to the general voice, but the song was a favourite one with Edith, and it is possible that it was intended to have a meaning for her private ear.

“It is like sending forth the dove from the ark, which always struck me as a cruel experiment,” sobbed Aunt Sophia.

“Let us hope, madam, that like the dove he will come back with the olive branch,” said the captain cheerfully ; but his rough and weather-beaten face, like that of many a one beside him, was full of tenderness and sorrow. As to Edith, she had no heart to speak, but wept in silence.

The harmony of human nature, however, is never universal, but has always some hitch or jar in it.

“I hope we’ve seen the last of *that* young whippersnapper,” was Mr. Bates’s observation to his henchman, Matthew Murdoch, as the canoes rounded the headland. “As he’s so young and tender, I shouldn’t be a bit surprised if the savages boiled and ate him.”

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE COPPER KETTLE.

DAYS and weeks went by without any news of the young midshipman, or any second visit from those to whom he had so courageously intrusted himself. This silence, though very distressing to those who mourned his loss, and reproached themselves for having taken advantage of his chivalrous offer, was, however, explicable from natural causes. Of course, it might be that the intention of their neighbours had been misunderstood, and their pretended friendship only one of those cunning devices which savages often put into practice, sometimes to carry out some cruel design, but more often without any other aim beyond that of gratifying their taste for duplicity ; but the idea of their having played so treacherous a part did not commend itself to the sober judgment of the captain, though it excited the apprehensions of the ladies. But while almost convinced that the lad stood in no peril from the hands of his unknown hosts, he had more serious doubts than he cared to express as to whether he had ever reached them. The storm, which the Malay had predicted, must have come up before the frail canoes, swift as they were, could possibly have got home, and they were quite unfitted to live in a heavy sea. On the other hand, if they had survived the passage there was reason enough in the rough weather that had since prevailed to account for their not having again attempted it. Though the castaways thought nothing of it, and the waters of the harbour, protected by the coral reef, remained almost unruffled, there was wild work on the sea ; and what the sea could do in those latitudes the crew of the sunk *Ganges* had good reason to know.

Every day from the look-out station Edith Norbury gazed with anxious eyes upon the island, looking through the misty foam, more vague than ever, but which had now

so strong a personal interest for her ; but she gazed in vain. Distressing, however, as were her fears for the safety of the boy envoy, they in some measure usurped the place of her former woe, and were preferable to it inasmuch as they admitted of a solution. She was never tired of talking of the lad, and of his heroic self-sacrifice, and in the hopes of his return seemed to find that tie to life which had hitherto been wanting to her. Under other circumstances, the significance of this change would not have escaped her companion's observation, nor, indeed, did it altogether do so, since in after-days she often recalled the impression it had produced, but for the present Aunt Sophia's mind was too much occupied with material matters to concern itself with psychological observation.

The preparations for the defence of the camp were pushed on unceasingly ; sentries were posted day and night ; there was constant practice with small arms, though no powder was expended, and all these indications of impending strife filled her with alarm. How Edith could range the island as she did without an escort was amazing to Aunt Sophia ; nor could she be made to understand that the rough weather which prevented the inhabitants of Breda from repeating their visit, must equally preclude any hostile manifestations from Amrac. Moreover, though she had had no official information of the matter, she was conscious that there were troubles in the camp itself, which her fears easily magnified into acts of mutiny. There had been meetings of the officers, and whisperings among the men, and though there was no manifestation of discontent, there was evidently a chord amiss in the general harmony that had hitherto prevailed. The truth was that there had been more than one case of drunkenness in the camp, an offence under other circumstances trivial enough, but which as matters stood was of the greatest importance.

For the question involved not only theft, but what was even a more serious crime, since it implied a guilty

knowledge shared by many—fraudulent concealment. Either the strong liquor in charge of the doctor had been stolen, or the destruction of the liquor casks had not been so complete as was supposed. The latter alternative was the more probable, since no liquor was missed from the store, while the drunkenness—though limited at present to some half-dozen cases—went on almost unceasingly. In every case the culprits denied that they were guilty, and instanced the impossibility of their getting drunk as proof of their innocence. This was hard to get over, and though the captain was not the sort of man to accept the explanation of ‘atmospheric influence’ advanced under such circumstances by the accused, he was sorely puzzled how to act. The very plea disturbed him not a little; for it was not such an excuse as would occur to the ordinary sailor’s mind. It seemed to point to some ruling and superior spirit behind the offenders. The crime itself, too, was in their position of the most dangerous kind, and might lead at once to mutiny and ruin. In the mean time, he kept these things as much as possible from the ladies’ ears.

One morning, after Edith had paid her usual visit to the look-out station, she was tempted by the loveliness of the day to extend her ramble. The weather, indeed, on the island was almost invariably clear and fine, but for the first time for weeks the disturbance of the sea showed signs of abatement; the clouds to the northward were lifting, and once more revealed the island which formed the subject of so much interested speculation to her. Even in the bays it was now possible to find shelter, and descending from the higher ground, she took her way along them in contemplative mood. Headland after headland was thus rounded, without her taking particular note of anything, but drinking in the freshness and beauty of the varied scene with unconscious pleasure. In this way, without knowing it, she had made half the circuit of the little territory, and was only made conscious of the fact by perceiving that she

was receding from and turning her back upon the neighbouring island. Having got so far she resolved to complete the round and return to the camp, as she had not hitherto done, the other way, when a circumstance occurred of which she thought little at the time, but which had its results.

Behind a projecting cliff, there lay one of those defiles, filled with brightness and colour from a thousand flowers—though the sun was absent from it—of which the island possessed so many. She was wondering whether it might prove a short cut to the camp, when she perceived a thin line of smoke wavering among the trees. It startled but did not alarm her. It could only proceed of course from some fire kindled by members of the camp, and it struck her that she would inquire of them whether there were any difficulties in the unknown route she was about to take. As she turned up the chine, as it would have been called had it been upon the English sea-coast, she suddenly came upon a little hollow in which half a dozen men were seated round a huge copper kettle. At her approach they all jumped up with a quickness that seemed suggestive of something more than mere respect, and one of them came forward to meet her. It was Matthew Murdoch, the man who had been placed in irons on the appointment of the captain to his command. His look was angry and even menacing, and he stood between her and the rest, with his great arms akimbo, as if to stop the way.

“I am sorry to have disturbed you,” she said gently, “but I have walked farther than I intended, and thought this might be a nearer way home than that by which I have come.”

“Well, it isn’t; it’s a longer way; and let me tell you a very dangerous one,” was the gruff reply.

“A very dangerous one?”

“He means precipices and that, miss,” explained another sailor, stepping forward.

"No, he doesn't," growled Murdoch, "he means what he says, and she'll find it out if she comes much farther."

"Tush, tush," exclaimed the other man, "you mustn't mind him, miss; but indeed it's not a safe road to those who don't know it; and you had better go back as you came."

Edith thanked him in her usual quiet tones, and at once began to retrace her steps. Once only she ventured to look back, and beheld both the men standing together where she had left them, with the blue smoke rising over their heads. She had, as she supposed, interrupted some outdoor festivity, and thereby incurred the wrath of the under-bred fellow. There was no harm done after all, nor did she nourish any resentment against him, but this unaccustomed roughness of treatment distressed her. With the men in general she had always been popular, and though the sullen behaviour of one or two had not escaped her notice, she had set it down to a natural moroseness of character; but in this man there had been evidently intentional rudeness, and she could not help reflecting, in the unhappy circumstances in which Aunt Sophia and herself were placed, how much they owed to the influence of authority, and how powerless they would be without it to shield themselves from insult. Never before did she feel so keenly the want of what is termed 'a natural protector,' one bound by the ties of blood or otherwise to make her quarrel his own. To the captain and his officers she was conscious of being under a hundred obligations, for which she had not been ungrateful; but it had never before been borne in upon her, how entirely dependent upon them were Aunt Sophia and herself, even for those rights which in less exceptional communities are common and assured to all. It was a reflection she did not dwell upon, and which in a few minutes lost its edge, but having once entered her mind it remained there; and though perhaps unconsciously to herself had no doubt a material effect upon her subsequent course of conduct.

Though well resolved to make no complaint of the manner in which she had been treated, albeit it had had in truth more of indignity, if not of insult, in it than can be gathered by mere description, the incident itself had made so strong an impression upon her that she related it, with reservation, to Aunt Sophia, who in her turn related it to Mr. Marston.

"Your aunt tells me you had an adventure this morning," he observed to Edith, when he met her later in the day.

"Indeed it was not worth repeating," she said hurriedly, lest some imprudence of his informant should get any of the people into trouble. "It was only that I came upon some of your sailors making tea, who were so good as to warn me not to come home by a new way, as I had intended, and whereby I might have come to harm."

"And where was it they were when you came upon them?"

Edith described the place as well as she could, eulogized their choice of a locality for their picnic at once so beautiful and so secluded, and dimly conscious of mischief endeavoured to make matters as pleasant and innocent as she could.

"And how do you know, Miss Edith, that the men were making tea?"

"Well, I don't know it," she answered smiling; "they did not offer me any, it is true; but as they had a fire lit, and a large kettle upon it, I concluded as much."

"And no doubt you are right," returned the officer carelessly. "Only it seemed strange that they should have troubled themselves to take their kettle so far from home."

The explanation allayed Edith's suspicions for the moment, but before nightfall a rumour from the camp reached her ears which filled her with consternation. It was said that in some secret spot on the farthest extremity of the island, the authorities had discovered certain

implements, including a copper boiler, and a coil of metal, technically called the worm, used in distillation; and that the same had been employed in extracting from the Ti-root (or, as Mr. Doyle more scientifically termed it, *Dracæna terminalis*) an ardent spirit. Here, then, was the mystery explained of those late cases of intoxication which had so puzzled and alarmed the authorities, and Edith Norbury had been the innocent cause of its solution. The tea party, which she had been so unfortunate as to interrupt, had been in fact a private still.

CHAPTER XXV.

ROYALTIES.

ONE morning the ladies were startled at their breakfast hour by most unusual sounds. The boatswain's whistle followed by a hum of voices and a confused uproar such as is audible in the movement of any large number of persons, even on sand. There was also a sort of hollow mnrmur, as though a band of horn-blowers were practising on their instruments for the first time. This latter noise continued after the others had ceased. The rampart that ran round their bay instead of its solitary sentinel was now lined with men, who, however, had placed themselves out of sight of the sea. It seemed only too likely that the long-expected visit from their neighbours had taken the form of an invasion.

While they sat in doubt, eager to know what had occurred, but waiting for orders from the captain, who had bidden them in any such case to remain indoors till he should send them word what to do, an emissary arrived from him in the person of Mr. Redmayne. His Majesty of Breda he said had arrived, and was about to land. He had

only brought five canoes with him, but a man from the look-out station had brought word that a large fleet filled with armed men was in waiting on the further side of the island. It was possible that Edith's presence might prove of service, but the matter was left entirely to her own discretion. She announced herself at once as ready to go, and accompanied by Aunt Sophia and the second mate, she at once repaired to Rescue Bay.

The spectacle that presented itself was even more striking than on the last occasion. From where the ladies stood they could see the whole camp in a posture of defence, although, beheld from without, its appearance was as peaceful as usual. The men were lying down in the batteries, and not a musket-barrel peeped above the parapet. The king's canoe, which was of great size, with a raised platform in the centre, was coming up the harbour, with two others on each side of it, the occupants of which splashed the water with their paddles, and flourished them above their heads in a graceful and dexterous fashion, while at the same time they sounded conch shells, like mermen in attendance upon their sea-king.

On the platform were two persons—one a little over middle age, of colossal size with a dignified expression of countenance, and the other a much younger man, of slighter build, and with a face so bright and eager, and yet, withal, so gentle that it might have belonged to a child. The absence of beard and whiskers increased this appearance of youth, so that until he rose and displayed his figure, which was almost as tall as that of his companion, and magnificently proportioned, it would have been difficult to guess his age, which was, in fact, nearly twenty-six. His hair was glossy black, and had a natural wave in it, equally removed from the crisp curl of the negro, and the straight hair common to so many tribes of the Indian Archipelago.

Despite the alarm which the situation inspired in Aunt

Sophia's bosom, her eye could not rest on so splendid an example of man's outward beauty without approval.

"Did you ever see such a magnificent young fellow?" she whispered in Edith's ear. "He looks like the bronze Apollo that used to stand in your poor uncle's library."

But Edith's attention was fixed on even a more attractive object, of which she had just caught sight—name'y, the missing midshipman, who, hitherto, obscured by the raised platform, could now be seen waving his handkerchief from the same canoe, in which the two interpreters were also seated.

"Look, look, there is Mr. Conolly!" she exclaimed excitedly.

"The dear, dear boy!" cried Aunt Sophia. "How glad I am!" and the tears stood in the eyes of both women.

At a word from the king, two men from the other canoes leapt into the water, and made signs to the captain that he should suffer himself to be carried in their arms to the royal barge; such a mode of locomotion—though it is called by our children 'king coach'—is not very dignified, but on understanding that its object was to place him on the same platform as the king, thereby implying an equally exalted rank, he consented very readily; then his Majesty with much complacency, like one who is exercising a new accomplishment, shook hands with the captain, and introduced him to his son, Prince Tarilam. The latter, to the astonishment of the captain, not only shook hands with him, but in very musical broken English observed, "Good morning, sir," whereat his Majesty clapped his hands triumphantly, and gazed upon his offspring with affectionate amazement, like a father, who, while recognizing the genius of his son, admits with modesty that it is not hereditary.

It must not, however, be concluded that King Taril was deficient in intelligence. No sooner had the procession come ashore than he beckoned Prince Masiric, and bade

him point out to him those objects of interest, the description of which had already inflamed his curiosity. The difference between the natures of these royal brothers was as distinct as any to be observed in the most civilized communities. They were equally observant, but the one, like the men of Athens, was captivated by mere novelty, and seemed to have little sense of comparison, while the other strove to appraise the relative value of the different objects brought to his notice with reference to their use and advantage.

In after days Edith used to liken King Taril to Peter the Great, whom, save in stature, he indeed greatly resembled. He had the good of his people, and their advancement in knowledge, always at heart, and preferred it, as was subsequently amply proved, even to the ties of blood and the gratification of a domestic affection which could hardly be surpassed. Masiric was a wit and a mimic, and never suffered his high position to hamper his love of drollery; whereas the king possessed a certain dignity which never deserted him, and even under the most trying circumstances preserved him from ridicule.

Even as matters were, and on so short an acquaintance, the captain was disposed to think well of him, but the news from the look-out was too serious to be ignored, and before admitting the visitors to the camp, he demanded an explanation of it. When the question was put through the Malay, the king drew himself up with an offended air, and the colour rushed into his face. His son whispered hastily into his ear, and pointed to Conolly, whereupon his Majesty inclined his head in haughty assent. Then the midshipman, after a few words with Tarilam, addressed the captain.

“The king, sir, I am bidden to say, harbours no thoughts of treachery. He is at war with his neighbours, and therefore has been compelled to put to sea with an escort sufficient to repel any attack that might be made on him,

but coming hither with all the sentiments of friendship, he thought it indelicate to alarm your people by the exhibition of such a formidable fleet. They are at the back of the island, it is true, but they are not near enough to save his Majesty from violence, a contingency which never so much as entered his mind, and he regrets that any similar suspicion should, nevertheless, have occurred to you." These words, so uncharacteristic of Master Lewis Conolly, were delivered with a deliberation which, though caused by the difficulty of translation, gave them a certain dignity.

It was now the captain's turn to speechify, a feat in which it must be confessed he was less successful than his royal visitor.

"Well, upon my soul, it was most uncommonly considerate and deuced gentlemanly of the old gentleman," he exclaimed with enthusiasm, "and you may tell him so for me."

This eulogium, rendered, let us hope, less literally than the speech of the prince had been, was received by the monarch with great satisfaction.

"Never," he said, "has the sweet voice of Deltis sounded more grateful to my ears." The captain bowed respectfully, and in an aside with the midshipman, inquired what on earth was meant by *that*? Then Master Conolly, with purple countenance, arising from a pressing tendency to mirth, reminded him that on account of his singing he had been likened to the bird called deltis, the only one of the feathered tribe in Breda who could favour its inhabitants with a song.

"But you do not sing in the Bredan language, my young shaver, so how is it that these good folks understand you?"

Then the boy modestly explained that Prince Tarilam had taken a fancy to him on his first arrival on the island, and ever since had passed several hours daily in his company, acquiring from him, with the help of the interpreter, the English tongue, for which he had shown a remarkable

adaptability, while in so doing he had of necessity imparted something of his own.

"But is this prince of yours and his father to be thoroughly trusted, think you?" inquired the captain, doubtfully; "for my experience as yet has been that the cleverer the savage the greater the rogue."

"There is not a more truthful or kinder-hearted man in England than Prince Tarilam, sir," answered the midshipman warmly, "and he tells me that all the good in him he owes to the teaching of the king."

"Well, well, I hope it may be so; at all events we must chance it," was the captain's conclusion; whereupon he formally invited the visitors to enter the camp.

Then, Master Lewis Conolly calling to mind that there were already two interpreters, and having something on his own account to say to somebody else, slipped away from the *cortège* and ran up to where Edith and Aunt Sophia were standing on a rock a little removed from the rest, but whence they had a good view of the whole proceedings. He was received by both with an excess of welcome, which, if he had been two years older, would certainly not have been accorded to him. He was just at that happy epoch when nobody but yourself knows how old you are, and thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of his position. Aunt Sophia called him indifferently "Mr. Conolly" and "my dear boy," just as the matter on which they were speaking chanced to be familiar or otherwise. Edith, by way of compromise, addressed him as Lewis; but the young rascal was well aware that he was as great a favourite with one as the other.

Aunt Sophia would have had him at once recount his adventures, but this juvenile Ulysses was much too wary to run the risk of wasting their effect at such a juncture. He confined himself to speaking of the exalted individuals who were then sharing their attention with him, and might at any moment monopolize it. He pointed out to them

the axes which hung from the shoulders of the king and his son, and which were the ensigns of their royal race. The handles were of ebony, and the blades of shells. Around the wrist of the former was also a bracelet of polished bone, which, though of the simplest material and construction, implied in its wearer the possession of the greatest honour as well as of the highest rank; a combination of the Victoria Cross and the Garter. It was worn also by Prince Masiric, as commander-in-chief.

"But I hope that beautiful Prince Tarilam has got the bone," observed Aunt Sophia.

"He has one, but he is too modest to wear it," returned the midshipman. "His view is that it is the reward of merit, and that there is no merit but only a fortunate accident in being a king's son."

"That is a very noble motive for a savage," remarked Edith, in astonishment.

"A savage! He is no more a savage than—well—I really know no one who would not suffer by comparison with him," cried the boy, with eager enthusiasm. "See, they are about to show them what a musket can do. In spite of all I could say, the Malay would explain the use of the bullet they picked up, and since then they have been wild to hear the 'white man's thunder,' as they call it."

The visitors were now, in great expectancy, assembled round the captain and Mr. Marston, the latter of whom had a musket in his hand. He was the best shot in the ship's company,* and had therefore been intrusted with the task of impressing upon their new friends the efficacy of firearms. The thunder could be made sure of, of course, but it was essential to demonstrate the effects of the

* Sailors are seldom good shots. This is the reason why the exploring expeditions sent to the North Seas have suffered so much privation, and is in a great measure the reason of their ill-success. There is a sufficiency of game, if only one could bring it down, which Dr. Rae, with his company of 'trappers'—Hudson's Bay men—never failed to do.

lightning. There was no lack of birds to aim at, albeit they were not of a kind known to European sportsmen; though songless, they were of the most beautiful and gorgeous colours—the men called them flying rainbows—and slid rather than flew through the warm and lustrous air. It seemed “a sin and a shame,” as Aunt Sophia said, to kill one, and all the more so, since never having been molested by man, and not understanding his inventions, especially gunpowder, they made no great haste to get out of his reach. It would have made an *habitué* of Wimbledon smile to see the care with which the first mate handled his piece, watched his chance, and then took aim at a bird as bright and big as a peacock, that was leisurely passing over their heads; it was very like a literal rendering of the metaphor, “a barn door flying,” and a barn door made more demonstrative by brilliant advertisements; but at all events he hit it, and down it came.

The flash of fire, the noise, and then the fall of the bird, created three distinct sensations in the visitors. Some stopped their ears, some shut their eyes (tho better, like Mr. Justice Stareleigh, to exercise their judgment), and even the king suffered himself to be betrayed into an exclamation of astonishment. As for the emotional Masiric—prince and commander-in-chief though he was—he ran after the bird like a retriever, and picking it up, examined it with the most minute attention. How the creature could have been killed without the flame from the gun reaching him, which it clearly had not done, taxed his reason beyond his powers to explain.

Prince Tarilam turned his shapely head towards the rock on which Conolly was standing, and smiled: “You have not the least exaggerated matters,” the smile seemed to say, “but I should like to have one or two things elucidated respecting this amazing incident.” The midshipman was at his side in a moment; but while the other lent his ear apparently to scientific information, his gaze was fixed

upon the spot which his companion had just left. Presently Conolly also turned his eyes in the same direction, as a man always does do, sooner or later, if the object of his discourse is visible.

"I do believe tho Prince has been asking questions about *us*, and not about the musket at all," ejaculated Aunt Sophia.

"Perhaps he wants to know whether it will kill people as well as birds," said Edith, drily.

"Oh, how wicked, oh, how *can* you!" exclaimed her companion; "I am sure the prince would not hurt a fly. Moreover, it can't be that, because Mr. Conolly is shaking his head, and very decidedly, too."

"That may corroborate my view," persisted Edith; "he is teaching him the rudiments of the sixth commandment."

After a great deal of gesture and interpretation, during which the king maintained an air of extreme gravity and reflection, while Prince Masirie exhibited his powers of imitation of a musket-shot—just as a child presents a walking stick and cries, "Pop, bang, fire!"—the visitors began to prepare for departure. The captain and the officers held their hands out, when, much to their astonishment and a little to their alarm, they were treated to quite another form of salutation. Each of the visitors seized his neighbour by the shoulder, the king holding the captain as in a vice, the prince seizing the midshipman, and Masirie clutching Mr. Marston with such hearty good will, that he left his mark on him for an hour afterwards; every host, in fact, was similarly collared by his guest.

"It is an expression of personal friendship," explained Conolly, hastily, for it was plain that the demonstration was not being accepted in the spirit in which it was offered—"the tighter they grasp you, the higher is the estimation they have formed of your character."

"His Majesty must think me an angel, then," murmured the captain, rubbing his arms. He smiled, however, with

much complacency, as did all the rest, as in duty bound. It was, moreover, a relief to them to find that this tenacious treatment, which suggested perpetual imprisonment, had, after all, a friendly aim.

Then, amid blowing of conch shells and splashing of paddles, the king and his suite departed. At the mouth of the harbour they delayed a little, while at a given signal the fleet, consisting of more than a hundred canoes, came swiftly up from below the island, and took their station behind the royal barge, when the whole *cortège* left for home. It was a splendid sight, and a method of royal conveyance at least as imposing as the gilt carriage and eight cream-coloured horses used on state occasions in our own country.

The two ladies would certainly not have grudged it their admiration, but for a circumstance which at the moment drew their attention to another quarter.

"See, Mr. Conolly has not gone," cried Edith, eagerly, who in the confusion and crowd upon the beach had not hitherto recognized the fact that the midshipman had been left behind. "How glad I am they have not taken him back with them. Though he *has* such a belief in their good-will, I much prefer to see him left with us."

"They have left other persons behind them, too," exclaimed Aunt Sophia, excitedly; "yes, they certainly have. The prince himself, with two of his people, no doubt as hostages and to show that their intentions are honourable. Now, I call that very nice of them. The idea of having such a Prince Charming for our guest is delightful. And, only look, I protest that that dear boy, who knows how I dote on royalty, is bringing him to talk with us. My dear Edith, I feel all in a flutter."

CHAPTER XXVI.

MASTER CONOLLY'S NARRATIVE.

As the midshipman and the young Prince of Breda approached the ladies, they could not help observing the contrast between them, which, indeed, considering that they were both favourable types, was as great as contrast could be. The one was a handsome English boy, fresh-coloured and blue-eyed, with a roguish drollery in his face, that even the presence of authority could only mitigate, and which the nature of the undertaking he had now on hand intensified to an unusual degree. The prince, on the other hand, whose comeliness was of quite another kind, and whose grace of form suggested some faultless statue, wore an expression of sedateness, altogether alien to his years. With this, however, was mingled no touch of austerity; indeed, it was the tenderness of his looks, joined to a certain worshipful awe as he drew near the young lady, which was trying Master Lewis Conolly's gravity to the utmost.

"The Prince Tarilam wishes to have the honour of your acquaintance, ladies," he observed sedately. The ladies bowed and held out their hands, which, to their astonishment, he raised respectfully to his lips. No courtier could have surpassed the grace and ease of it, only he saluted the younger lady first, and perhaps retained her hand a second or two longer.

"Welcome," he said, "to Faybur, and may you be happy with us." The speech, though so brief, was evidently rehearsed beforehand, and he looked at the midshipman when he had uttered it with the simplicity of a child who seeks approval from his teacher.

"Quite right," exclaimed Conolly, encouragingly. Then, in lower and more rapid tones, he added, "I was priming his Royal Highness with a lot of pretty speeches as we came

along, in the canoe, and that is the one he selected. He is so jolly green that I had not the heart to keep up the illusion that you were the goddess of flowers; but he wishes me to remark that you certainly *are* a flower, Miss Edith, for all that, and the very fairest he has ever set eyes on."

Edith blushed and smiled, and deprecatingly shook her head.

"It is no use denying it like that," observed the midshipman, gravely, after a brief conference with his companion; "his Royal Highness says he only made a mistake in the kind of flower; at first he was under the impression that you were a rose, but he perceives now by the movement of your head that you are a lily of the valley."

"You bold, bad boy," cried Aunt Sophia, "I am quite sure the prince has been saying nothing of the kind."

At which Edith smiled outright, the midshipman burst into uproarious laughter, and Tarilam laughed so musically that it seemed astonishing that so gentle a sound could proceed from such a formidable frame. There was no sense of fun in it, of course, yet it was perfectly natural and genuine, for it arose from sympathy, just as the countenance of any kindly-disposed person reflects the spectacle of happiness in others.

"The prince is to be the captain's guest here for some time, and will share his quarters," continued Conolly: "as his host will be occupied with his duties, his Royal Highness hopes that he may be permitted to call occasionally in 'Ladies' Bay,' and cultivate your acquaintance. He would like some of your leisure time to be spent in teaching him reading, writing, arithmetic, and the use of the globes."

"Mr. Conolly," said Edith, severely, "it is neither good taste nor good manners to make fun of any guest, especially of one who, from ignorance of our language, is necessarily at your mercy."

"Ten thousand pardons, Miss Edith; you don't know

what a beast I seem to myself, now you have held the looking-glass up to me," returned the midshipman; "I will never offend again." His penitence was so earnest as well as so abject, that Edith could not but forgive him; she knew that Master Conolly's crime went no further than in permitting his high spirits to run away with him, whereas they required a tight hand.

"Now, tell me truly what the prince does say?" she answered.

"Well, I have told him that we have all duties to do here, except you ladies, and that I am sure, when we are not at leisure to look after him, you will be so good as to do so a little; and especially that you will help him to learn English, which it is his great desire to master; indeed, I have not exaggerated matters, Miss Edith, about his having the highest regard for you; and I am sure" (this in a hasty parenthesis), "for your aunt also; and in spite of all his strange surroundings, you will find Prince Tarilam to be a thorough gentleman."

"We are quite sure of that," said Aunt Sophia, an opinion evoked not less from the lad's own evident conviction, than from the demeanour of the prince himself. His position was an exceptionally trying one, something like that of the gentleman in the figure 'Pastorelle' in the old quadrille, who had the utmost difficulty, while dancing alone opposite two ladies and another man, not to look like a fool; nay, Tarilam had not even the relief of movement, but in stillness and silence had to endure the consciousness of being talked about by his three companions without understanding one word they said. Yet he never on the one hand betrayed a trace of awkwardness, nor on the other, of a too great audacity, but remained the personification of unembarrassed ease. His expression reminded one of those admirable specimens of gentleness among the deaf and dumb, for whom as they listen in vain, but with a smile of patient intelligence, to the conversation of their

more favoured fellow-creatures, few fail to feel a touch of tenderness.

For the present, his patience was put to no further test, for the captain here sent to say that his guest's quarters were ready for his inspection, so, with a grace and courtesy seldom seen out of a minuet, he took his leave.

"That is the best bred young man that ever I saw," was Aunt Sophia's remark as soon as he got out of earshot (though *that* didn't matter much), "and I do hope we shall see a great deal of him." As Edith took no notice of this aspiration, it may at least be supposed that she had no objection to offer to it. "I wonder where he gets his clothes from?" continued Aunt Sophia, naïvely.

At this, both of her companions burst out laughing. "If we are to teach him English, you will have an excellent opportunity of asking him that question, Sophy," observed Edith.

"But, my dear child, you mistake me; I don't want to know who is his tailor, but where the material comes from and what it is, which, as an attire, becomes him so admirably."

"I can tell you all about that, ladies," said the midshipman, demurely, "not, of course, now, but some day when you may happen to ask me to dinner, in order to have the whole story of my adventures in Amrac."

Their curiosity to learn that matter was, as the young rogue knew, extreme, and he received his invitation for that very day accordingly. It was not the first time that he had partaken of the hospitality of the tenants of Ladies' Bay, whose house, indeed, save that of the captain, was the only one of dimensions sufficient for the entertainment of guests, and he not only esteemed the honour very highly, but thoroughly appreciated the superiority of the food he got there over that of the midshipmen's mess. The freshest fish that could be caught, the daintiest bird that could be snared, was always reserved for the ladies' table.

It was, therefore, with the sense of having well dined, and of being made much of, and of having deserved it, that the young gentleman proceeded that afternoon to narrate his story to his hostesses, or rather—for he was somewhat in the position of Canning's knife-grinder, as to 'story'—to allow what he had to tell to be elicited from him by the gentle pressure of inquiry.

"In the very first place," observed Aunt Sophy, "we are wild to know what the prince was saying about us before you introduced him, and what was the proposition at which you shook your head so positively?"

"It is the Amrac custom, Miss Norbury, for every one to choose for himself a personal friend, a ceremony which you saw take place on the beach just now; and he who is chosen becomes as a brother, to be loved, cherished, and protected by the other to his life's end; and this honour the Prince Tarilam proposed to himself to confer upon you."

"Upon *me*?" exclaimed Aunt Sophia. "Why, goodness gracious, this is the first time the man has ever set eyes upon me!"

"Once is surely quite enough, madam," returned the midshipman, demurely, "for any man to be impressed with your merits, only as this ceremony involved some physical pain, and was also liable to misconstruction, I persuaded him to perform it by proxy."

"Then who is to take care of my niece?" inquired Aunt Sophia, with a severity she found it difficult to assume, for the compliment that had been paid her was not displeasing.

"Miss Edith, madam, has been bespoken as a sister by Majuba!"

"And who on earth is Majuba?"

"To be sure—that is because you would not let me begin at the beginning. Majuba is the only daughter of King Taril, a most lovely young woman, and as good, I do assure you, as she is beautiful."

"You seem to have a very great insight into character, young gentleman," said Aunt Sophia. "May I ask if you stood proxy for Edith as you did for me, and were pinched by this excellent young person in the shoulder?"

"She did just nip me with her finger and thumb," stammered the young gentleman; "it was like being vaccinated, only it seemed shorter."

"I am afraid it was contagion, however, that you received from it, and not protection," observed Aunt Sophia, with uplifted finger. "Mr. Redmayne was certainly wrong, Edie, when he told us that no midshipman had been ever seen to blush."

"Mr. Redmayne has made up for it since he became a mate, by blushing whenever a lady speaks to him," returned Master Conolly, contemptuously.

"And how old is this Princess Majuba?" inquired Edith, smiling in spite of herself.

"She is just four years younger than Prince Tarilam, and very like him," replied the midshipman. "She was uncommonly interested in you both, and would have come here to-day, but that it is contrary to etiquette for a woman to accompany the king on a visit of ceremony."

"But tell us all about everything in its proper order," interrupted Aunt Sophia, impatiently; "do let us persuade you—if only temporarily—to drop Majuba."

Master Conolly cast at Aunt Sophia a look of deep reproach—she had always hitherto been his best friend, and this desertion, and especially the rallying of him in the presence of Edith, wounded him to the quick—and then commenced as follows:—

"When the canoe in which I went away approached Amrac, there was a great surf, so that it seemed impossible to land; but somehow the thing was done, and I found myself literally high and dry, for I was carried at once upon men's shoulders, and in the midst of a great concourse of people, to the king's house. I offered him the presents

sent by the captain, which he accepted very graciously, and at once began to eat the sweet biscuits and the tea. On the other hand, I was regaled with something like toffee, only very dry and hard, on a tortoise-shell dish; the Malay told me it was the highest compliment that could be conferred upon me, so I pretended to enjoy it, while the scoundrel himself was eating the most excellent cray-fish and dried turtle, served on plantain leaves.

"I did my best to pretend to like it, but it was hard work, for I was very hungry. Every one else, who was eating what pleased him, pretended to look on me with envy, nor did the king himself—though he could hardly be enjoying the dried tea-leaves—observe that I was not worthy of so much honour; but directly the prince entered the room, he seemed to understand the whole situation at a glance. He bade me, through the interpreter, put the precious fragments of hard-bake aside as if for future use, and then caused me to be served with more agreeable, if more humble, food.

"It struck one at once, somehow, that here was an intelligent and independent-minded fellow, not in the least affected by forms and ceremonies. Though his manner to his father was full of respect and duty, it seemed to me that the king looked up to him as to a superior mind. At all events he did what he liked with his Majesty as with everybody else. After the meal was over, he took me into an adjoining room and introduced me to his sister, the princess."

"How was she dressed?" inquired Aunt Sophia.

"In white raiment, like an angel. Her attire was, in fact, of the same material as that you saw worn by the prince, only much fuller and longer; it is made of tappa, a substance beaten out of the bark of a sort of mulberry tree. Every one wears it, and it is always spotless; but washing is extremely cheap in Breda. The interpreters were not admitted to the princess's presence, so, though

she and her brother talked together of course, all my intercourse with her was by signs. Yet, you have no idea how well we get on together."

"Indeed we have a very good idea," said Edith, laughing.

"It is all very well to laugh," continued the midshipman, pretending not to understand her, "but though I felt quite safe in the company of these two charming persons, I had no such confidence in the people at large, and I especially mistrusted the Malay."

"We have not yet done with your princess," observed Aunt Sophia severely; "your interview seems to have been very short. Did nothing else occur than what you have told us?"

"There was a little dance which I forgot to mention," said Master Conolly, with simplicity.

"Oh, indeed, you danced with this young woman, did you?"

"With the princess? Certainly not, madam. But, by way of entertaining me, as I suppose, a number of young ladies, her handmaidens, were summoned, and executed what you might call a ballet."

"But what might *you* call it, sir," inquired Aunt Sophia. "Was it a ballet?"

"I rather think it was," confessed the youth, demurely. "They were all dressed in flowers, and very pretty."

"Very pretty," repeated Aunt Sophia, not like an echo, but severely.

"I mean the flowers were very pretty," explained the young gentleman. "But I was very tired and sleepy and hardly looked at anything."

"He means he had no eyes for any one else but the Princess Majuba," observed Edith, smiling.

"I don't know what he means," said Aunt Sophia; "I only know he ought never to have gone to Amrac without somebody to take care of him. Do you mean to say, sir, that you were not asked to sing?"

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten that. The princess—I mean the prince—kept saying 'Deltis, Deltis,' and so I did sing her a song."

"'Rule, Britannia,' I dare say," said Aunt Sophia, scornfully; "nothing of a sentimental character, of course."

"Oh, no, I sang her a horticultural song, 'The Last Rose of Summer,' I think it was."

"He has already acquired all the duplicity of the savage," observed Aunt Sophia, lifting up her hands. "Well, *go on*, sir."

CHAPTER XXVII.

MASTER CONOLLY'S NARRATIVE CONTINUED.

"PRESENTLY I began to yawn, so that the prince burst out laughing, and gave me in charge to one of his male attendants, who showed me where I was to sleep. This was a large room in another house, with a couple of fires in it, for the nights in Amrac are much colder than in Breda. They gave me a mat to lie upon, and another to draw over me, and a block of wood for a pillow. I should have slept soundly enough on it, but for the strangeness of the place, and for the being away from everybody I knew."

"Poor fellow," exclaimed the two ladies, simultaneously; for under the mask of raillery and pretended severity, Aunt Sophia felt at least as tenderly for the boy as Edith.

"Then, in the middle of the night, eight men came in and made up the fires, preparatory, as I thought, to roasting me at one of them, but it was only, as it turned out, an excess of civility and attention, and soon after day-break they brought me yams and cocoa-nuts and some turtle soup for breakfast, which I partook of in the presence of about five hundred men and women, all sitting

round me in perfect silence, and waiting, as the interpreter presently told me, for a song.

"The people at large seemed to care for nothing but singing and flowers, and though very kind and pleasant, could not understand that one could not sing for ever, even on turtle soup. I was so tired and weary, that when the king came down and wanted more singing, I had hardly strength to comply with his request, but made signs that I wanted to return to Faybur to recover my voice. Whereupon he pointed up to the trees, and blew strongly with his mouth; and, to indicate what would happen in such weather if the canoes should venture out, he joined his hands together, with the palms upwards, and turning them the reverse way, signified that they would overset. Then he said, 'Deltis,' indicating how I should employ the time, for a month or two, till the fair weather set in, and I, on my part, resolutely shut my mouth and shook my head.

"Then the prince came full of intelligence and consideration, and smiles that seemed to take disappointment away from everybody, and took me by the hand to his own house.

"There I found the two interpreters, our own and the Malay, from the latter of whom the prince had already learnt a few words of English, and we set to work to make ourselves intelligible to one another. Never did I see so quick a scholar. In less than a week he knew at least three times as much of my language as I did of his, and long before I came away we dispensed with the interpreter altogether. The king, on the other hand, was rather a dunce at it, he said he was too old a dog to learn new tricks."

"My dear Mr. Conolly, he surely never said *that*," expostulated Edith.

"No, no, it was what he would have said, I mean, if he could have said anything; but the prince and I got on famously."

"And Majuba?" demanded Aunt Sophia, inexorably; "was she not also a pupil?"

"To be sure, I had forgotten that; when I said that the prince was the quickest scholar I had ever seen, I should have said the quickest male scholar; the princess beat him into fits."

"What imagery!" murmured Aunt Sophia. "How true it is that poetry is the natural language of love! And when you had taught this peerless young person to talk, may I ask what it was you talked about?"

"I think you are rather hard upon our young friend, Sophy," remonstrated Edith. "Remember, Mr. Conolly, that you are not obliged to criminate yourself, if you find any difficulty in replying to that question."

"I find none at all," retorted the young gentleman, audaciously, "I talked to the princess about *you*. She was immensely interested, and I told her everything."

"About *me*?" exclaimed Edith; her tone was not only one of surprise, but of annoyance.

"All about both of you," he answered hurriedly, "how you had embarked on board ship for India, and were shipwrecked, and were now in Breda all alone."

"Oh, I see," cried Edith, with an air of ill-concealed relief; "and she was kind and sympathizing was she?"

"She was, indeed; she would have come to you at once, as I have said, if etiquette had permitted it."

"You do not seem to have been much inconvenienced by etiquette yourself," observed Aunt Sophia, drily.

"Was I not? Wait till the king delights to honour *you*, madam (as I am sure he will), and gives you hard-bake," replied the youth innocently. "As for the princess, she will be here—weather permitting—to-morrow or the next day."

"Faybur has, doubtless, new attractions for her, which it had not before," remarked Aunt Sophia, viciously.

"Yes, madam," was the demure rejoinder, "she cannot bear being separated from her only brother."

"You have said that you mistrusted the Malay," observed Edith, after a pause. "Why was that?"

"Well, I can hardly say; it is, perhaps, only a case of 'I do not like thee, Dr. Fell,' but still I found out one thing from our own interpreter during my first day at Breda, that it was not on that island, as he told us, on which the Malay had been shipwrecked, but on Amrac, and that the people there did not kill him, but suffered him to escape to Breda, which is suspicious, as showing a fellow-feeling with the refugee."

"The Amrac folks are very wicked, I suppose, then?"

"A pack of murderers, nothing less."

"What a partisan our young friend has become," observed Aunt Sophia. "I dare say if the truth were known, there are princes and princesses in Amrac quite as respectable—to say the least of it—as in Breda."

Master Conolly shook his head, and in tones much more serious than he had hitherto used, assured his companions that this was not the case. "From Amrac," he said, "there is everything to fear, a nation delighting in bloodshed, and because no treaty can bind them, always at war with their neighbours."

"And they might come over here some fine day," observed Aunt Sophia, apprehensively.

"Well, any fine day—for they are not such good sailors as the Breda folks. Yes. There is no fear, however, but that we shall be able to give a good account of them," said the midshipman, drawing himself up to his full five feet.

Here a messenger came from the captain to summon Mr. Conolly, to relieve him from his duties for an hour or two in the entertainment of the prince; whereupon he vanished at once.

"Poor Captain Head finds conversation with his Royal Highness a little difficult, no doubt," observed Aunt Sophia.

"I should hardly think that, after Mr. Conolly's account

of his proficiency in English ; he must have understood us, I fancy, a great deal better than we thought he did."

"Gracious goodness ! Do you really think so, Edith ? What a horrible notion ! What was that we said about his clothes ?"

"You mean what was that *you* said ?" returned Edith, laughing.

"Dear, dear ! it makes one quite hot to think of it ! What a mischievous monkey that boy is."

The afternoon, though fine as usual, was somewhat oppressive, and when it was so it was the custom of the ladies to bathe in a sheltered cove at the extremity of the little bay. It was a reflection they had often made, that though their whole wardrobe had been safely landed, the articles which they had heretofore been accustomed to set most store by, such as their dinner and ball dresses, were now utterly useless, while their more homely garments were become of great value ; of these none were more useful than their bathing gear, which enabled them to take a bath of the most enjoyable kind whenever they felt inclined for it. Edith was a tolerable proficient in natation, and, under the new conditions of the sea and air and sand, enjoyed it as she had never done before, while her aunt watched her with envy from the shallows. Beside the five senses, there are various channels for the influx of human happiness, not so common to all, but which, nevertheless, many foolishly despise or ignore, who have it in their power to use them. One of these is the art of swimming, the neglect of which in an age of so-called 'culture' and education, and one which prides itself on squeezing all that is pleasant out of life to the last drop, both for man and woman, is inexplicably neglected by the latter. At the date of our story, this was of course still more the case. It had been her father's custom, however—itself a rare one at the time—to spend at least a month every year by the sea-side, and there Edith had acquired this accomplishment.

Enjoyable as she had found it at Ramsgate and Dover, it was ten times more so at Breda ; where the buoyancy of the sea, the purity of the air, the brilliancy of the sky, and the exquisite beauty of the surrounding scenery, joined to that forgetfulness of trouble produced by the exercise itself, made her in truth more happy when in the water than she ever felt out of it.

Aunt Sophia splashed about well within her depth, with a much inferior sense of pleasure, and with a certain groundless apprehension on her niece's account, such as a hen might feel who has hatched a duckling. She was constantly entreating her niece not to swim so far out, as though increased depth meant increased danger, and I am afraid that Edith took some malicious pleasure—as experts will do under such circumstances—in arousing her fears. On the present occasion, she was disporting herself as usual, some distance from the shore, when a cry from Aunt Sophia reached her ; she laughingly replied that she was all right, and, to prove it, took another stroke or two out to sea. Then the cry was repeated, and this time it struck her that there was something unusual in it. It was not the warning note of apprehension, but the shrill treble of agonized alarm. She looked back and beheld her companion standing on the shore, and pointing with a vehemence that also somehow signified despair, to some object between herself and the swimmer.

Edith's eyes followed the direction of her gaze, saw something twinkle in the water and then disappear. She knew it at once for what it was, for on board ship she had seen it many times, and never—though herself in perfect safety—without a shudder of fear ; it was the brown fin of a shark.

Fear seized her soul, and for a moment so paralyzed her limbs that she was in imminent danger of sinking ; if she could have sunk, and been drowned before the creature came up with her, she felt that it would have been well

indeed. It was not so long ago that she had felt that death in any form would have been welcome to her; but that hopeless mood had of late been passing away, and at no time, indeed, could she have confronted such a form of death as *this* without horror and aversion. The most miserable among us who yearns to be "anywhere, anywhere out of the world," would shrink from such a gate of exit. Not even unconsciousness, which generally mitigates a shock of horror so intense and sudden, stepped in to her relief. The vitality, that for an instant had deserted her frame, returned to it, and with it an only too accurate understanding of her helpless position. The shark was between her and the shore. No boat could possibly reach her as soon as it, and indeed no man, if man could be found to run for her sake upon certain death. The sentry on the rampart, had indeed, as usual, been withdrawn upon the ladies expressing their intention of bathing, and no one apparently was in earshot of her aunt's passionate cries for help.

All this she took in at a glance, as it were mechanically, but her whole power of thought was concentrated on her unseen enemy. We are told that when sudden death lays hold upon us—as when, for example, those lose consciousness who are about to drown—that a vision of our past sweeps through the mind, and we seem to live our life again at the very moment of quitting it; but this was not the case with Edith Norbury. Her eyes as she swam desperately shoreward, were fixed with agonized intentness on the sea, and her soul was monopolized by the thought of the hateful creature that was lying in wait therein to rend her. When she should see that brown fin rise again, it would be the sign, she knew, that death in its most appalling form was close upon her.

At present it was probable that the shark was not aware of her proximity; he had, indeed, been swimming close in shore, and had snapped at that not unconscious

trifle Aunt Sophia, just as she ran out of his reach ; but it was to the last degree unlikely that having found bathers about, he would not be looking for more. Still there was hope, without which she could not have swum a stroke—that he might have gone elsewhere.

Edith positively was not fifty yards from the sandy beach, and was straining every nerve to reach it, when something close beside her rose out of the water, and sideways with a gleaming flash, made at her ; then she uttered one despairing shriek and knew no more.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TO THE RESCUE.

PRINCE TARILAM had been right royally received by Captain Head ; entertained with the choicest pickled meats and other European delicacies, including champagne—which he had declined to swallow in an effervescing state upon the ground that living things were neither drunk nor eaten in Breda—and welcomed as hospitably as guest could be ; but conversation had flagged between his host and him. He could not use his newly-acquired tongue with others with the same freedom as with Conolly, who understood his peculiar difficulties with it, and could help him out of them. He was diffident, too, as some of us, though not naturally shy, are apt to be when talking to a Frenchman who is not our tutor ; and everything was so new and strange that the attention which it was so necessary to pay to his companion's speech was constantly being diverted elsewhere. So when he had delivered certain messages from the king, full of amity and concord, and these had been reciprocated, both parties felt their conversational powers on the wane.

"I can't be talking to this blessed prince all day about the greatness and goodness of his father," was the captain's impatient reflection, "so I'll get young Conolly to take him off my hands."

At the mention of the midshipman, the prince brightened up at once, as the face of the after-dinner guest is gladdened by the offer of an unexpected cigar, and the proposal that his young friend should take him round the camp was accepted with pleasure. Except that the summons withdrew him from the society of the ladies, the midshipman was equally pleased to be his cicerone.

There are few things more pleasant than to introduce a person, for whom one has a liking, to objects of interest, which, though familiar to ourselves, are unknown to them ; it is something like the sensation of telling an excellent but well-known joke to a new audience. Everything in the prince's eyes was novel and amazing, down to the very grindstone on which the men's swords were sharpened. The glitter of their bayonets—for he had never seen any polished body, or the action of light upon it—delighted him. A small hatchet which Conolly gave him, and which he compared with his own axe of shell with quite a piteous sense of its inferiority, filled him with gratitude. His observation was ceaseless, and so keen, and even deep, that a superficial explanation did not serve his turn, and it was not always easy to satisfy his curiosity. Like Columbus, he had discovered a new world, but, unlike him, one much more marvellous and in a far higher stage of civilization than the one with which he was familiar.

Their walk extended beyond the camp, to the outworks of Ladies' Bay. "Why is there no sentinel here, as elsewhere?" inquired the prince, whose quick eye noticed what was absent as well as what was present. Conolly explained to him, that in order to afford greater privacy, the sentry was withdrawn when the ladies were bathing.

"Bathing!" he cried in his own dialect. "Are they

bathing there?" From his tone, which was one of alarm, Conolly gathered there was something seriously amiss, but knew not what. "Tetmil, tetmil," exclaimed Tarilam excitedly. Conolly knew that this was the term in Breda for a shark, and his heart sank within him. Before he could reply, an agonized shriek broke from the shore, where, a quarter of a mile away, he suddenly caught sight of a figure in blue serge, wildly gesticulating. The next instant he was alone.

Literally like an arrow from a bow, Tarilam had left his side, and was flying along the sands with a speed that almost outstripped the power of vision. Master Lewis Conolly was a good runner, and to leap from the rampart and follow his late companion was the work of a moment, but he might as well have matched himself against the wind. Aunt Sophia, almost out of her mind with terror, was conscious only of something white flashing by her like a gigantic gull, and plunging into the sea. In truth, there was need of speed beyond what lies in the thews and sinews of ordinary men. Edith's shriek, and, perhaps, some mechanical beating of her arm through excessive terror, had momentarily frightened the shark—the most cowardly of all predatory creatures—and caused it to miss its aim; when it turned to come at her again, with gleaming teeth and ravening maw, it found a less helpless foe.

Almost as much at home in water as on land, and not unused to such combats, Tarilam awaited its rush, and at the moment of impact swerved aside, and buried his hatchet in the creature's head with a force that needed no second blow. Then, bearing up Edith's inanimate form with his left arm, and oaring himself with the other to the shore, he laid her at Aunt Sophia's feet, with the dumb delight of a retriever.

The whole affair had happened within so short a space that Conolly only just reached the spot in time to aid in restoring the girl to consciousness, a task to which Miss

Norbury alone would have been quite unequal. Her nerves had by no means recovered the frightful shock to which they had been subjected, and, indeed, the spectacle of her niece's preserver, whose white garment was covered with blood from his dead foe, was not of a nature to restore them. Either fearing the effects of his appearance upon her, or by a delicate intuition recognizing that his further services could just then be dispensed with, the prince quietly re-entered the water, and busied himself in removing the stains of combat from his apparel.

Edith came to herself with a shudder, and looked about her like one who is doubtful of her own identity; the truth was she could not understand, with the recollection of the horrible fate that had seemed so certain and so imminent, how it had come to pass that she was still in life and unharmed.

"That dear prince has saved you," sobbed Aunt Sophia, replying to her wondering look. "He has the swiftness of a deer and the courage of a lion; no other human being could have done it."

"That is quite true," observed the young midshipman sorrowfully. "I was of no use at all."

Edith held out her hand and smiled feebly. "I am sure you did what you could," she murmured.

"Oh, yes, I ran like a snail," he answered sorrowfully; "now, perhaps, you will believe what I told you ladies of Prince Ta'ilam. There are very few princes at home, I fancy, who would run like that to meet a shark in his native element."

It might have been rejoined with some reason that such feats were out of the line of European princes, but neither lady was in the humour to throw cold water on the boy's enthusiasm, nor to detract, however indirectly, from the merits of his hero.

"Tell me how it all happened," cried Edith, her eyes wandering gratefully to her unconscious preserver.

Master Conolly obeyed, describing with no little dramatic force, because with perfect naturalness, what had taken place; then perceiving that Edith was greatly moved, and apparently distressed by the narrative, he added with an attempt at jocularly, "I do hope that in future you ladies will be more careful where you bathe."

"Bathe!" cried Aunt Sophia, vehemently, "I doubt whether I shall ever dare again even to wash. The creature came up to within a foot of me, my dear Edie, before it went off to you." Edith shuddered again, then murmured with emotion,

"How can I ever tell him what I owe him?"

"It is unnecessary," observed the midshipman confidently. "One look of thanks, if I know him, will tell him all you feel. He thinks much less of what he has done, believe me, than we think of it. What is distressing him just now, on the other hand, is a matter that you will only smile at. Though the people of Breda are almost amphibious, they dislike above all things getting wet. A shower of rain, which fortunately seldom occurs, will keep the whole nation within-doors, and the prince, I will wager, was much less concerned about the shark than about getting his clothes wet in killing him."

As Conolly completed his explanation, Tarilam, his attire dried in the soft air and sunshine, and freed from the stains of combat, came up with a quiet smile of congratulation.

"I hope miss is not much worse," he said; a sentence which it is probable was not altogether extempore; indeed, he had been repeating it to himself for some time by the sea-shore, like Demosthenes, before he ventured upon its deliverance in public.

"I should have been *dead* but for your timely aid," said Edith, holding out her hand, which Tarilam took with great respect, and bowed over like a bronze Chesterfield. "I shall never forget that I owe you my life, prince."

"I did nothing," said Tarilam, with a disclaiming wave

of the hand. "Thanks to my friend here"—he touched the boy lightly on the shoulder—"who gave me this hatchet, it was very small work; if Deltis" (a word he pronounced with extraordinary sweetness) "could have run as fast, he would have done as well."

He spoke slowly and with difficulty, but in the gentlest tone; it was evident, by the expression of his face, that he wished the young fellow to share whatever honour was to be derived from the late proceedings.

"That is a very big 'if,'" observed the midshipman. "I don't know what I should have done, even had I come up in time and been in your place. I am afraid the shark would have eaten both me and the young lady."

Edith shuddered. The prince perceived it, and at once assumed a tone of indifference. "In Breda we think nothing of tetmils," he said, "there are one, two, three—a thousand of them everywhere."

"That only makes it worse," observed Aunt Sophia.

"What he means," explained Conolly slyly, "is that your first shark always makes an impression, sometimes a very serious one."

"I cannot laugh with you, Mr. Conolly," said Edith; "I have been too near and too lately at death's door."

"And such a door!" remarked Aunt Sophia naïvely.

The prince looked interrogatively from one to the other.

It is only the alien who notes how much even the most ordinary conversation teems with metaphor.

The helplessness of this magnificent creature in the toils of small talk moved the pity of both the ladies, and helped him to find a way to their hearts almost as much as his heroism. What also struck them very favourably was that the curiosity which consumed his fellow-countrymen seemed to be absent in his case, at all events, as regarded themselves. He took everything belonging to them as a matter of course, even their bathing dresses. In this last matter it is probable that they did him more than justice,

since, to Prince Tarilam's eyes, whatever they wore must have appeared an excess of apparel ; but the fact was, that while observant enough of externals, he attached little of that importance to them which, while among ourselves it is the indication of a weak nature, is everywhere the characteristic of an uncivilized race.

"Don't you think, Edith," whispered Aunt Sophia, after a pause that would have been embarrassing to almost any stranger, but which the visitor endured with all the *sang froid* and twice the grace of a royal equerry, "don't you think we ought to ask him to tea?"

The notion of meeting the occasion in such a very conventional way drew a smile to the girl's face, which was immediately reflected in that of Tarilam.

"I shall have much pleasure to come," he said, with gentle earnestness.

"Now, how could he possibly have heard me?" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, wonderingly. "Did *you* hear me, Mr. Conolly?"

"No!" replied the midshipman laughing, "but Prince Tarilam can hear the grass grow and the buds blossom ; if you wish to say anything you don't want him to hear, I warn you that you had better write it down. Then you will be safe."

The prince smiled sadly, threw out his hands with childish pathos, and shook his head. If he had said, "There, indeed, you have the advantage of poor me," he could not have expressed himself more clearly.

"We must really teach him to write, my dear," observed Aunt Sophia, *sotto voce*.

"If you will please to be so good," said Tarilam humbly.

"Drat the man," murmured Aunt Sophia, this time taking good care to be inaudible, "one cannot open one's lips within a mile of him, without his catching one up."

The acuteness of the prince's senses was indeed amazing, and it had been brought to perfection by practice ; that of

his intelligence was also not less abnormal, but hitherto it had necessarily been dormant; and though "Knowledge to his eyes her ample page, rich with the spoils of time, had ne'er unrolled," he longed to read it. This species of ambition is very rare among those we call savages, and, indeed, with uneducated people of all sorts, who generally seek to excuse their ignorance by a pretence of indifference. Tarilam had none of this pinchbeck stoicism; it was not often that in the contemplation of a novelty, however amazing, he lost his dignity, but there were occasions when he did so. This happened, for example, on his first introduction to the ladies' little parlour, where the mirror which had once ornamented the cuddy of the *Ganges* was let into the wall.

It was curious, as the spectators of the circumstances afterwards agreed, that the mere sight of a perpendicular reflector—for with a horizontal one he must of course have been familiar—should have so moved him; perhaps it struck him as hanging water, but his delight at it was like that of a child.

Aunt Sophia and Conolly were greatly amused, but Edith was not so; it seemed somehow in one of whom she had begun to form a high ideal like a degradation; she was glad of the excuse of their having to change their attire, to withdraw from a scene that was nothing less than distressing to her. When she returned, the prince had exhausted his admiration of the mirror, and was entranced by another object; he was standing with a little unframed water-colour drawing in his hand, and discoursing of it to the midshipman; she caught the words, "Tetmil, Tetmil," repeated with great eagerness, as she entered the room.

"The prince is charmed with your picture of the bathing cove, Miss Edith," explained Conolly.

"It is a compliment to me that he should have recognized it," she replied modestly. His approval would some-

how have been more welcome to her—though she owned to herself that this feeling was unreasonable—had it been less extravagant; but as Tarilam had never seen a picture, which seemed to him a species of magic, it was no wonder that the counterfeit presentment of a place he knew, on canvas, aroused his amazement.

Upon being informed that neither Aunt Sophia nor the midshipman could paint, he evinced unmistakable satisfaction. To have found that the whole race to which this enchantress belonged was dowered with the same gift would have given him, perhaps, an impression of his own inferiority too hopeless and discouraging, just as the reflection that “there are forty poets in Paisley” must strike despondency to the hearts of its neighbour towns. The difficulty which the guest experienced in communicating his ideas did not, on the other hand, rouse in Edith any sense of shortcoming, while the obvious distress which his failure to do so sometimes caused him, awoke her sympathy.

The reason why so many people find pleasure in foreign travel, though only slightly acquainted with foreign tongues, is that neither at home nor abroad have they any particular thoughts to communicate; they are well content to be understood by the waiters; whereas the struggle with Tarilam at this early period was to render adequately and intelligibly not only the inferences and conclusions he drew from the novel objects around him, but his own views and opinions.

CHAPTER XXIX.

MR. BATES FINDS HIS MASTER.

IT was amazing how soon, with the more cultured of his new friends at Faybur, and especially with the ladies, Prince Tarilam made himself at home. His very unlikeness, because it consisted mainly in an excessive simplicity, facilitated assimilation, and made it as easy to get on with him as with a truthful child. In matters that were within their common cognizance, on the other hand, he exhibited an extraordinary natural sagacity, while every accession of knowledge added to his attractions as a companion.

With the sailors, however, this was not altogether the case. They had the usual prejudice of their class which induces them to apply the term 'nigger'—however obviously inapplicable—to all persons not born of European parents, and causes them to be more sceptical even than the hereditary aristocrat of the nobility of nature. Some of them were jealous of the favour which the new comer enjoyed with their superiors, and some resented the stranger's marvellous physical gifts, which threw those of their best runners and swimmers and climbers completely into the shade.' As time went on, however, and Tarilam's generous nature began to be recognized, these antagonistic sentiments remained only among those comparatively few with whom superiority of any kind, but especially that of moral worth, is always offensive. Even the two attendants that remained with him were treated for his sake with a civility which the captain's express commands would have otherwise failed to secure to them. It would have been hard, indeed, had it not been so, for they gave no trouble, and when not employed in ministering to the needs of their young master made themselves generally useful in a hundred ways.

A small canoe had been left with them, and they taught

the men such arts of propelling it without stretcher or rowlock as seemed impossible till they themselves had learnt the accomplishment; they showed them how to catch fish by novel methods, and how, when caught, to smoke them, so as to make provision for the future; how to make rope as strong as cables out of the parasitic creepers, that hung like cobwebs from the trees; how to make mats and baskets; and to express from certain fruits a sherbet which they would have pronounced excellent had it but a little rum in it. Nay, at the captain's request, these good-natured fellows even gave rudimentary lessons in the planting of yams, though they thought it, in common with all other useful labour, very literally *infra dig.* and only suitable for women.

All this time, while the harbour at Faybur remained like a mill-pond above the mill, and the little island basked in sunshine and soft airs, the open sea was so high and rough that all communication was cut off with Breda. The prince and his two attendants were as completely separated from their own belongings as though they had been exiles, and, so far as he was concerned, he became every day more naturalized, and familiar with his new surroundings. In old times he had had thoughts, which the traditions and superstitions of his people had forbidden him to encourage, of annexing Faybur to the paternal dominions; and though it was now no longer in his power to do so, he found an attraction in it such as his native isle did not possess. He passed most of his time at what might be called the seminary in Ladies' Bay, where he showed an extraordinary facility in acquiring, like a child at a dame's school, not only the rudiments of the English tongue, but 'the three R's.' Hitherto his method of computation had been of the simplest; as many as one's eyes; as many as a crow's toes; as many as one's fingers. Both hands and one over made eleven, and was the limit of calculation. The feathers of a bird, the waves of the sea,

and the number of stars in the firmament had all been for him just eleven.

He could now tot up to millions, and if the achievement gave him no great advantage, he derived an immense satisfaction from the curriculum that carried him thither. Never had pupil more kindly teachers than had he in the two ladies; never had tutors a more eager or grateful pupil. His difficulties, though they were often absurd, were never laughed at, with one exception. He had a difficulty, as many of us have at home, though of a different kind, with the letter *h*, which even his musical voice could never pronounce soft enough; and it was a never-ending joke with his gentle preceptors that he always addressed one of them as Aunt Soapy.

When he accompanied them in their rambles, like a Sandford and Merton rolled into one, attended by two female Mr. Barlows, his education was still continued, so that he learnt as much out of school as in it; and, what was rather significant, had it been worth any one's while to observe it, when he was not walking with the ladies he preferred to walk by himself. It would be interesting to know, could one have got to "the back of mind," what the thoughts of this singular being were occupied with on these occasions. It is certain that (in one sense, at least) he did not think much of his ancestors. Though the descendant of a long line of kings, their power seemed but paltry, their aims ignoble, and their exploits of little worth. Culture, indeed, had had an effect on him very different from the result which it too often produces among ourselves; he was not puffed up by his newly-acquired superiority over his own race, but rather depressed by the sense of what was lacking in them, and by his own inferiority to those about him; he had escaped being a prig (if one can imagine a Breda prig), because he was not cultured beyond his wits. What he had acquired, vast as it was in comparison with his previous knowledge, had but convinced

him how much he had yet to learn. Yet there is reason to believe that his reflections were not all despondent. It is no evidence of vanity to be conscious of our own dormant powers. *Æsop* felt it in slavery, and Keats at the horse jobber's; not that Tarilam was either philosopher or poet, but only that he felt himself fit for something beyond bestowing toffee on Royal favourites, or even distributing Orders of the Bone to meritorious man-slayers. If his vague and simple aspirations could have been put into words, they might have found appropriate expression in the poetic phrase, "Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay;" albeit that yet unwritten line was not more unknown to him than Europe was. He was conscious only that beyond the sea somewhere there was another world, peopled with beings of a higher nature than his own, and whose life was more worth living. It may be he was wrong; "the wild joys of life," the dive through the "league-long rollers," and the coming up through the blue wave beyond it, the rush, dart in hand, through the air, on the ranks of the foe, the fray, and the feast, may be worth all our lacquer and gilding, but, if so, Tarilam erred in good company and from no ignoble instinct.

Thus thoughtfully was he strolling one morning along the cliff top that looked towards Brada, and at a distance from the camp, which, considering the nature of the ground, would have taken an ordinary walker some time to cover, when he suddenly perceived Mr. Bates coming towards him. The figure of the third mate was, of course, familiar to him, but there was something in the movements of the man that puzzled him. He was gesticulating violently; holding up his hand as if to forbid his further advance, and shouting with discordant emphasis.

"Stop," he cried, "you something nigger." Then came an oath such as Tarilam had sometimes heard from the sailors, but the meaning of which he could never understand, for swearing is a product of civilization, and was unknown

in Breda. "Keep where you are, I say; we don't want any prying savages hereabouts."

Tarilam could perceive the man was angry, but had no conception of the cause, nor did it give him any disquietude. What monopolized his attention was the strangeness of his gait—he lurched and swayed as he came on, and occasionally stumbled. If Tarilam had ever seen a horse with the staggers—but he had never even seen a horse, or evolved the idea of one out of the depths of his own consciousness—it would have reminded him of Mr. Bates, but if he had ever seen a man attempting to walk when very drunk, a still more perfect parallel would have occurred to him.

"Hi, hi! you; stop, I say." By this time the two had met; and Mr. Bates, with a flushed face and protruding eyes, had placed himself straight—or as straight as he could—before him, so as effectually to bar his progress. "Now just you go home again."

"Go home," repeated the prince, with mild surprise. "Why should I go home?"

"Well, there are a thousand reasons, but one will do. Because we don't want any blown-up-with-gunpowder niggers here. Now just be off." Of the exact sense of the man's words, stammered and hiccoughed as they were, there might have been easily some doubt, but about the tone in which they were uttered there could be none at all. If Tarilam had been a dog which had been bidden to go home by a brutal and ill-tempered master, he could not have been addressed more insultingly. Into the bronzed cheek of the prince there suddenly came a vivid colour, and into his soft eyes a flash of flame, which had Mr. Bates been in his usual frame of mind—which was inclined to prudence—would have warned him of danger like a signal fire. But the third mate was in an abnormally heroic state, full of ire, and also of the courage called Dutch.

"Look here," he stuttered, "you nigger, you'll have to go,

and if you make me speak again you'll not do it with a whole skin. It is bad enough that you and those other two dusky devils should be kept in camp, holding your heads up and thinking yourselves the equals of Christian men, not to mention of officers and gentlemen like myself, but that you should come peeping and prying out of bounds here is intolerable. Go home, I say."

"No." The monosyllable was uttered gently, but with a determination which was unmistakable; and the speaker looked straight into the other's eyes as he said it. The quietness of expression in his face added, no doubt, to the temptation of its proximity, and Mr. Bates struck him on the mouth with the back of his hand. The next moment he was swaying in air, with a consciousness of space about him, and of a fall of about four hundred feet sheer upon a rocky beach.

Mr. Bates's hair, in the absence of any barber, had grown long, and the other had seized him by it, as one takes a rabbit by the ears, and swung him off the cliff top. Face to face with the terrors of instant death, the drunken wretch was sobered in a moment; his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth, and his limbs grew limp like those of a dead man on the gallows-tree, but all his senses were keen enough.

He heard a sudden voice a long way off cry, "Tarilam! Tarilam!" in a tone of earnest entreaty, and he knew that the midshipman Conolly was pleading for his life. Never did eavesdropper listen to a conversation not intended for his private ear with a greater attention than this gentleman *sus per col* paid to the subsequent dialogue.

"Let him go, let him go," halloed the midshipman. Mr. Bates, when he heard that phrase, reflected with a pang upon the indefiniteness of the English tongue; the prince might very well have taken the words as an encouragement to drop him, instead of pulling him up. "Don't kill him! spare him!" shouted the midshipman, whose voice as it

grew nearer unhappily became less distinct through want of breath.

"He struck me," answered the prince irresolutely, and without turning his head. He seemed to be selecting the most jagged rock for the reception of the body of Mr. Bates, which was oscillating under his hand like a pendulum. "No man has ever struck Tarilam and lived to say so."

"For *my* sake, for *my* sake," urged the midshipman, "I beseech you not to let him fall."

"You are my chosen friend ; I can refuse you nothing," murmured the prince, regretfully ; and with no more effort than it costs a sailor to heave the lead, he landed the third mate upon terra firma, where he lay, though he was not so inanimate as he looked, like a sack just dropped from a crane.

"How did it happen ? What did he quarrel with you about ?" inquired Conolly, hurrying up, and gazing with amazement on the prostrate mate.

"I don't know," answered Tarilam, gloomily. "He wandered in his walk, and stumbled in his talk, and was angry, and then he gave me a blow. I shall feel it here," and he touched his mouth, "as long as I live."

"It has not marked you," replied Conolly, naïvely—in the midshipmen's mess blows were not uncommon in those days, nor the demands of honour very exacting—"but you may depend upon it, he will never boast of it—will you, sir ?" This appeal he made to Mr. Bates himself in answer to a glance of adhesion from that gentleman to the promise thus made on his behalf.

"I will never, never boast of it," he murmured earnestly. "The prince may take his davey of that."

Indeed, it was pretty clear that, as regards recent proceedings, Mr. Bates had not very much to boast of, and might well be trusted to be silent for his own sake.

"Come, let us go back to camp," said Conolly persuasively.

With a quiet gesture of assent, Tarilam turned away,

and without so much as a glance at his still prostrate foe, began to retrace his steps. Mr. Bates's eyes, like those of a snake in the grass, followed him with an expression of concentrated malignity, which also included his young preserver.

"To-day for you, my friends," he muttered, between his teeth, "to-morrow for me."

It would have been better for all parties, himself included, had Mr. Bates been permitted to obey the laws of gravity.

It may be taken, as a rule, that the time which is given to an unmitigated scoundrel to repent himself in is passed in some occupation of quite another kind, and Mr. Bates was no exception to it. A bad man's life is like a bad novel; the third volume is generally the worst part of it; and there is little cause for regret if its conclusion is what the reviewers describe as 'hurried.'

CHAPTER XXX.

LET US KILL THE NIGGER.

LIFE in Faybur, though for the most part uneventful enough, did not run quite so smoothly with Captain Head and his officers as, thanks to their solicitude, it was made to do for the two ladies. That that private still, the existence of which Edith had so unconsciously betrayed to Mr. Marston, was from time to time at work somewhere, though its whereabouts—for the scene of its operations was easily shifted—had hitherto remained undiscovered, was certain; half-a-dozen cases of drunkenness had come under the notice of the authorities, and given them great disquietude. Their anxiety would have been even greater had it not seemed pretty clear that the offence was confined to a few of the sailors only; not, as was rightly

concluded, that every man Jack of them after so prolonged an abstinence would not have got drunk if he could, but that those who had so ingeniously invented the means of indulging themselves in that luxury took care to keep the secret to themselves. The wisdom of this reticence was unquestionable, for, as matters stood, it was difficult to punish even those who were manifestly guilty of the offence in question.

"It is all very well," Messrs. Murdoch, Rudge, and Mellor would stutter, when accused of being intoxicated—and it was these three men who most frequently fell under that suspicion—"but how is it possible for a fellow to get drunk when every drop of liquor is under lock and key in the doctor's tent?" They continued to attribute their condition to the effect of the climate upon their respective systems, and except that there was a kettle missing, the uses of which it was not judicious for 'the court' to point out to the public at large, there was really no means of refuting this line of defence. The gravity of the danger, however, was fully recognized; and while each instance of delinquency was hushed up as much as possible, not a stone was left unturned to discover the root of the mischief.

Of all this the two ladies were blissfully ignorant, and though Edith, as we know, had her own views of the doubtful tenure on which authority existed in Faybur, the matter had of late months troubled her but little. One could not say that her thoughts were fixed elsewhere, but they had wandered with more or less persistency in another direction. The arrival of Prince Tarilam had very agreeably broken the monotony of life in Ladies' Bay. It had from the first been a pleasure to teach him, so far as she was competent to do so, those "Fairy Tales of Science" and "Long Results of Time," the simplest details of which had for him the attributes of a miracle and the attractions of magic. To note his mind expanding under the light of knowledge, like a flower in the sun, was a spectacle most

interesting to her, while before long the advantage became not wholly on one side, but reciprocal, and she found herself listening almost as often to a tutor as talking to a pupil. However simple were the views of Tarilam they were original, and while as natural as those of a child appealing to his elders, were also as audacious. Untrammelled by custom and the restrictions imposed by education, he discussed with as much firmness as freedom the ways of fate and the mysteries of being. The simple but illogical faith of his own people he had never accepted, but had hitherto been content with a contemptuous tolerance of it. The theology which he learned from Edith recommended itself to him in many ways, but by no means exhausted his spiritual curiosity. Aunt Sophia was often not less appalled by the boldness of his speculations than amazed by their intelligence.

On the other hand, there were reasons connected with Edith's antecedents—the blight that had fallen upon her happiness in the loss of her lover, and made a broken column of her young life—that prevented these 'obstinate questionings' from shocking her, and even to some extent recommended the interrogator. Not even in the old days, with Layton himself, had she discussed these matters with so much freedom and interest.

After the employments of the day were over, some of which, too, he usually shared with the ladies, it was become a custom with the prince to join them at their evening meal; an officer or two, or the chaplain, would sometimes be of the party, and still more often Master Conolly, who would contribute to the amusements of the evening by his gift of song. But at other times Tarilam would visit the ladies quite alone, and on such occasions Edith found his company most agreeable, because he was then more like himself, and would express his natural sentiments without that dread of ridicule which had already found its place in a breast that had hitherto been absolutely

fearless. One evening, when the three were occupied in the usual manner—the two ladies employed in needlework, and Tarilam fashioning some graceful ornament out of tortoiseshell, an art in which he was a proficient—their conversation was suddenly interrupted by a tumult without; there was a roar of voices and a rush of feet, and hardly had they risen from their chairs before the little cottage was surrounded by a mob of sailors and the parlour windows, which, as usual, were wide open, filled by excited and furious faces.

“What is the matter?” inquired Edith with quiet distinctness. Her face was pale, but otherwise she exhibited no sign of fear. Aunt Sophia, on the other hand, was speechless with terror. It was the impression of both women that a mutiny had broken out.

“Matter enough, miss,” returned a voice she knew; it was that of William Dean, the gunner, a man who had always borne a good character, and behaved himself to her with great respect. “Murder’s the matter, and yonder stands the man who did it.”

He pointed to the prince, and as he did so a tumultuous and inarticulate cry of fury arose from those about him.

“Kill him! kill the nigger!”

“Make way then,” interposed a brutal voice. “Don’t talk, but do. Let me get a shot at him.” And flushed with rage and liquor, the man Mellor, pistol in hand, here forced himself to the front, and levelled his weapon at Tarilam’s head.

Before he could pull the trigger Edith had stepped swiftly between them.

“You vile coward,” she cried. “Is there no man here who will see fair play and justice done?”

“Justice! Yes; we’ll see justice done,” answered a shrill voice. “Let us take him to the same spot, lads, where he killed the mate, and serve him likewise.”

“What, without trial?” cried Edith vehemently. “Are

you savages, then, who have forgotten that you were once Englishmen? William Dean, Luke Norman, Robert Ray, as you are honest men, I charge you to stand by me!"

"We mean no harm to *you*, miss," returned the gunner, "but as for this here prince, as he calls himself, we must have life for life."

"And so you shall, if he has taken life. I'll stake my own that he is innocent. Look at him, men, and tell me if he wears a murderer's face."

Like a curtain that conceals some noble picture, she drew herself aside and showed him to them.

Motionless as a statue he stood confronting them, with a sort of mild amazement in his face. The confusion of tongues had prevented his half-cultured ear from catching what was said, but he could perceive that the intruders were violently enraged, and against himself. It was his first experience (save one) of brutal passion in his new acquaintances, and it seemed to afford him all the interest of novelty. His eyes glanced from one to the other in dumb surprise, and then turned interrogatively to Edith.

"Tarilam does not understand," he murmured, with a quiet smile.

"They say you have committed a murder."

"No." Never was charge so serious met by so phlegmatic a denial. There was no more waste of tone than of words about it. If he had been accused of leaving the door open, he could not have defended himself with greater indifference, or at the same time more convincingly. The shake of the head that accompanied the monosyllable intensified alike its force and its *sang froid*. "If anything of the kind has happened," it seemed to say, "I do assure you it was not I that did it."

Had his audience, indeed, been one capable of appreciating the value of evidence, the prince would have no longer been in danger; but the men were blind with

passion, and, moreover, there were some among them less concerned to detect a culprit than to sacrifice a victim.

"He is lying! Kill the nigger! kill him!" arose again from all sides; nor was it possible that a catastrophe could have been much longer averted had not a murmur from the fringe of the crowd announced the arrival of assistance. "Stand back, boys, here's the captain!"

It was not indeed the captain, but his *avant courier*, Master Conolly, who had run on ahead of him, and with drawn cutlass was in a moment scattering the crowd to left and right. The man Mellor, indeed, presented his pistol at him, but another sailor who stood by struck the barrel upwards and the weapon exploded in the air.

The sound of it seemed to remind the rest of the seriousness of their course of conduct and had a sobering effect, which was greatly increased by the appearance of the captain, followed by Mr. Redmayne, both armed to the teeth.

"Who fired that pistol?" he inquired, in a tone sharp and short as the shot itself.

"John Mellor."

"Is any one hurt here?" The captain was looking into the little parlour and 'counting heads' as he put the question.

"No, sir."

"That's well, and especially well for John Mellor," was the grim reply, "for if one hair of these ladies, or of the prince, their guest, had been injured, I would have shot him dead."

Mr. Mellor vanished silently away, and the crowd began to thin.

"You mutinous scoundrels!" continued the captain. "What is it you want that you must needs raise this tumult and disgrace yourselves in the eyes of our friend and ally?"

A murmur of discontent and menace ran through the crowd.

"He has committed murder."

"What, the prince? Who says so? Let the man that can prove it stand forth. Would you commit murder yourselves by slaying a man without trial? That a foul crime has been done in our midst is only too true, but it cannot be wiped out by another. Come, all of you, to the officers' tent, and hear the matter sifted. Prince Tarilam, I must trouble you to come with us; for though no assurance of yours is necessary to clear you in my eyes, this miserable suspicion must be stamped out."

With a pained and wondering look, such as children wear who are witnesses to the quarrels of their seniors, Tarilam bowed assent. It had been brought home to him for the first time that these superior people, dowered with such gifts and attributes that had seemed to him little short of superhuman, could be as violent and irrational, when the humour seized them, as the natives of Amrac. As he took leave of the ladies he retained Edith's hand in his for a few seconds.

"You stood between me and the short gun," he murmured with intense emotion. "But for you Tarilam would have been a dead man. He will never forget it."

"I ran no risk," she would have answered, but with his usual swift and noiseless tread he was gone in a moment.

Conolly and a couple of sailors who could be relied on were left behind as a guard for the ladies.

What had happened they had yet to learn, but that such a precaution should have been deemed necessary to their safety was full of sombre significance.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE EXAMINATION.

THE 'officers' quarters' in the camp at Faybur was a long narrow tent, furnished, not uncomfortably, with the contents of half-a-dozen cabins. Everything, however, had this evening been moved away from the centre of the apartment, to make room for a certain something, which lay under a sheet on trestles, and at once, with a terrible fascination, attracted every eye. The feet standing out stark and stiff, and the veiled face showing sharply through its covering, presented the unmistakable lineaments of death. How is it, one wonders, that no sooner has the breath of life departed than the very form that contained it becomes new and strange to the eyes of the living! Heaven forbid that it may be no foretaste or analogue of the final separation from us of the soul.

Young as he was, Tarilam had seen death in many forms, nor had it for him the awe and mystery that it possesses for more cultured minds; but as he followed the captain's steps, he approached the silent shape with a certain air of reverence as well as interest that had its effect upon the beholders. Quietly and without crowding, the majority of the castaways had entered the tent and were regarding his demeanour with keen attention. If the prince had really committed the murder, as one observed to the other, it could not have been the first by many, or he could scarcely have "kept himself so cool" in the presence of his victim. Once only he showed signs of perturbation, when they reached the corpse, and the captain gently drew back the sheet and revealed the features of the first mate. Then Tarilam uttered the dead man's name, with infinite gentleness, and sighed profoundly. "I did not know it had been so good a friend of mine," he simply said.

"So good a friend of all of us," exclaimed the captain, vehemently. "A more dutiful officer and a more loyal messmate than Robert Marston never drew breath. My curse upon the cowardly hand that slew him."

"And mine," "And mine," cried several voices.

There was something menacing—nay, almost bloodthirsty—in the ring of them, which seemed to remind the captain that there was less need to arouse the general indignation than to turn it into the proper channel. When he spoke again his voice took a graver and more judicial tone. "This poor fellow here, my friends, was as dear to me as to any one of you, and none can be more resolved than I to avenge him; but, above all things, let us be just. We have no lawyers amongst us, but it will be possible, I hope, to get to the bottom of this matter without them; and in the first place, it behoves us to hear what those have to say who saw him first where he lay dead. As for me, I know nothing except from hearsay. Mr. Redmayne yonder brings me word that Mr. Marston has been picked up on the beach with his head battered in, and Mr. Doyle reports that he is dead. That is all that I know for certain, and all that nine-tenths of you can know, yet I find fifty men have taken upon themselves to lay the guilt at the door of a fellow-creature because his skin is a trifle darker than their own. William Dean, you were one of those men. Now let us hear what accusation you bring against Prince Tarilam, and on what grounds."

The gunner stepped forward with an embarrassed air. "I know nothing, sir, but what I was told by my mates; they said that the prince had done it to their certain knowledge."

"Who said?" interrupted the captain, curtly; "let us have their names, if you please."

"Well, sir, there was Mellor for one."

"Very good, let Mellor stand forth. You are the man who fired a pistol just now at Mr. Conolly, to prove your

detestation of murder, I suppose. Well, what do you know about this other?"

"The pistol went off of its own head in my hand," growled Mellor. "I never meant to hurt the young gentleman; it was that prince as we were after."

"Why, what had he done?"

"Chucked Mr. Marston over the cliff."

The sort of murmur which is called 'sensation,' mixed with a note of assent, here arose from the crowd. They had found a spokesman to justify their late proceedings at last.

"You saw him do it, did you?"

"No, I didn't, but Rudge and Murdoch, they saw him."

"Let Rudge and Murdoch stand forth."

The two men obeyed, Rudge willingly and even demonstratively enough, Murdoch with less promptness. His face was white to the lips, and he kept it studiously averted from the spot where the dead man was lying.

"Now tell us what you know, Rudge."

"It was my afternoon off duty, and I was rambling about the island with Murdoch, and presently I got tired, and sat down to have a smoke, and Murdoch he went further on. I had not been two minutes alone, when I heard him cry out, 'Rudge! Rudge!' and I jumped up and ran to him. He was standing on the cliff top, pointing down below; and I looked down and saw the body on the beach. 'Burst my buttons,' says I, 'why, if it ain't Mr. Marston.'

"'Yes,' he cries, 'some one has pitched him over the cliff;' and he was shaking his head and flapping his hands, and very much put out about it was Murdoch."

"But how did he know Mr. Marston had been pushed over the cliff?" inquired the captain. "Why might he not have fallen over?"

"I suppose he never thought of that," said Rudge stolidly.

"That was it ; I never thought of that," echoed Murdoch, replying to his mate's look of inquiry. His voice was hoarse and mechanical ; and when he had spoken his tongue flickered about his lips as though they were in need of moisture.

"Now I should have thought that had been the most likely supposition to come into any man's mind, unless it was already running on something else," observed the captain reflectively. "Mr. Maraton yonder," here he leant his head sideways towards his dead friend exactly as he would have done had he been alive, "was not one to make enemies."

"True for you, sir, that is so," was murmured on all sides.

"Then why should the notion of any one's having done him a mischief have entered into your mind?" inquired the captain.

"The ground was trodden all about as though a struggle had been going on," exclaimed Rudge, "and the grass on the brink of the hill cliff was torn away in tufts as though some one had clung there till he had been flung off."

"I am speaking to Murdoch, not to you, Rudge," exclaimed the captain sharply. "I suppose he has a tongue of his own in his head like the rest of us."

If that was so, the person in question did not seem at all inclined to use it ; he stood silent, with his arms folded on his chest, his head sunk forward, and his eyes doggedly fixed upon the ground. The captain glanced from this unattractive object to his guest, who, with head erect and fine form drawn to its full height, presented indeed a strange contrast to it. "Now I want to know who it was that, having satisfied himself so easily that there was murder done here, went a step further, and laid it at the door of Prince Tarilam?"

"It was Mr. Bates, sir," said the gunner.

"Mr. Bates," exclaimed the captain, in astonishment. "Then why is not Mr. Bates himself here to say so?"

"He ain't very well, sir," observed Rudge; "he was took bad at the sight of Mr. Marston. But he told us with his own lips that the prince had done it, for he had almost served him the same trick himself, at the very same place, not three weeks ago."

"Do you mean that he said the prince had tried to throw *him* over the cliff?"

"Yes, sir, he did, and that Mr. Conolly caught him at it."

"Fetch Mr. Bates and Mr. Conolly here this moment."

"Mr. Bates is ill in bed, sir."

"Then bring him out of his bed. I don't move from this spot till this affair is sifted to the very bottom."

As a legal investigation, the captain's method of proceeding left much to be desired. It was as haphazard and inconsequent as it was informal; but it was not altogether unadapted to the materials with which he had to deal; while the personal interest, and even the bias, he showed in the matter were far from being resented by his audience. The appearance of Matthew Murdoch, and the manner in which he had made his statement, had prejudiced them against him; but they were also prejudiced against Tarilam. There was so little logic in their mental composition that they did not understand that if one of the two 'suspects' was guilty the other must needs be innocent.

Presently Mr. Bates appeared, led between two men, which gave him the air of being in custody. His face was red and swollen, his eyes were unnaturally prominent and wandered round the tent as if in search of something. When they lit upon the dead man, however, he took no more notice of him than if he had been asleep.

"It was Tarilam as did it," were his first words.

The captain, without attention to the abrupt and voluntary character of this statement, merely inquired, "How do you know that?"

“Because he tried to kill me in the same way. He held me over the cliff top and would have dropped me, just as he dropped Mr. Marston, and on the very same point of rock. He knew the best place to do it.”

A murmur of indignation went round the tent. Here was evidence enough, indeed, and to the taste of the hearers.

The captain turned mechanically to the prince, who gravely bowed his head. “It is quite true that I meant to drop him,” he quietly said. “He struck me.”

There was a low growl of anger and discontent. “He has confessed it!” muttered a voice or two; and one man cried, “Hang him! hang him!”

The captain held up his hand for silence.

“Why was I never told of this, Mr. Bates?”

“Mr. Conolly asked me not to tell.”

“Let us hear what Mr. Conolly has to say about it.”

The midshipman had by this time arrived, followed by the two ladies, for whom the crowd made way. They did not, however, push to the front, but shrank from the neighbourhood of the dead body; they had only just learnt the nature of the catastrophe which had caused the mob to invade their dwelling; their distress on Mr. Marston's account was extreme, the elder lady was almost overwhelmed by it, and would willingly have remained within doors, but she could not permit her niece to come unattended, and Edith's interest in the living had overborne her natural tremors.

Conolly stepped forward and briefly stated what he knew of the rencontre between the prince and the third mate. It was quite true, he said, that he had kept silence upon the matter, but not more for the prince's sake than for that of Mr. Bates, who had committed an unprovoked assault upon him. The prince had resented it, no doubt, with unnecessary violence, but from what he (Conolly) knew of him, he was, he was persuaded, quite incapable

of any such unprovoked and murderous outrage as was now laid to his charge.

The third mate seemed to take no notice of this observation; he moved his hands across his eyes, as though to sweep away some obstacle, and peered through the crowd in the direction of the ladies with anxious persistence. Edith was speaking eagerly, though in low tones, to Mr. Redmayne, who, in his turn, whispered a few words to the captain. "By all means. Let us hear what Mr. Doyle has to say upon the matter," answered the latter aloud.

The surgeon, who had just removed from the captain's side to that of Mr. Bates, here answered to his name.

"When was it that you first saw Mr. Marston at the foot of the cliff?"

"About an hour and a half ago, sir."

"Was he then alive?"

"No, sir. No man could have lived for one minute after such injuries as he had received. On the other hand, from the condition of the body he could not have been dead long. Half-an-hour at the most."

"You are confident of that," said the captain.

"I am quite certain that he had not been dead an hour."

"Miss Norbury," said the captain, "can you state with accuracy at what time Prince Tarilam came to your house this evening?"

Aunt Sophia strove to speak, but the situation was overpowering; the knowledge that every eye was turned on her, but especially the spectacle of the dead man, who seemed to be awaiting, like the rest, in dumb expectancy, her momentous reply, was too much for her nerves. "I can answer that question," said Edith, in a firm and confident tone, "for it so happened that I remarked to my aunt upon the circumstance that Prince Tarilam had joined us earlier than usual. It was fully two hours ago."

"Did you look at your watch?"

"My aunt did so."

Here Aunt Sophia found her voice.

"It is quite true, Captain Head; it is exactly two hours and a half since the prince joined us."

A murmur of satisfaction ran through the crowd. The watch that Miss Norbury held in her hand appealed to their senses as no mere verbal testimony would have done.

"That circumstance, at all events, frees our guest from all suspicion of guilt in this matter," observed the captain. "I think it is due to him, Mr. Bates, that you should acknowledge as much."

The third mate answered not a word. He was staring wildly at Edith with both his hands stretched out before him. "I never pushed him over," he cried. "He jumped over of himself. I can't help his dripping with water. Keep him off, I say; keep him off!" The intense terror of the man manifest in his face and eye and trembling limbs was shocking to witness, and communicated itself to those about him. They fled from him in all directions, and left him standing by the corpse. The surgeon only kept his place by his side.

"Can any one explain the meaning of this?," inquired the captain in an awe-struck tone. "Is it possible that this unhappy man is confessing to having perpetrated the crime himself?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Doyle, with an air of conviction. "It is fair to say that there is evidence enough that he was absent when the murder—for a murder I fear it was—was committed. Mr. Bates is suffering from an attack of delirium tremens."

CHAPTER XXXII.

WAS IT POSSIBLE?

SHOCKING as was the murder of Mr. Marston to his friend, the captain, it was hardly more terrible or symptomatic of trouble to come than was the professional dictum pronounced by Mr. Doyle as respected the third mate. Delirium tremens is not a disease that is engendered by occasional excess, though even that would make the circumstance of the gravest significance, but by long and continuous drinking habits; and these had been proved to exist in one of his own officers, a man in duty bound to set an example of sobriety, and especially to discover and expose the drunkenness which had so mysteriously crept into the camp. That the offence was closely connected with the assassination of the first mate there could now be little doubt. Mr. Marston had been very active in his endeavours to find out from whence the liquor came, and who supplied it, which had of late been demoralizing the men; and it was only too probable that in some solitary expedition he had come upon the delinquents in the very act of distillation, and had fallen a victim to their violence. Edith herself, as we know, had been stopped and turned back for a similar reason; and Tarilam had been treated in the like manner.

In their case their object had not been detection, and therefore their lives had not been sacrificed by those they had involuntarily disturbed in their wrong-doing. Mr. Marston, an officer devoted to his duties and to be deterred by no menaces of personal violence, had perished at their lawless hands. So far the matter was clear, but as to who had been the actual murderers—for it was probable, unless the first mate had been taken at a disadvantage, which the signs of conflict about the fatal place seemed to evidence, there were more than one—it was by no means certain.

Appearances seemed to point to Murdoch and Rudge, but not more strongly than to Mr. Bates himself, who, however, was freed from the consequence of his own confession (or what had looked very like it) by the testimony of Mr. Doyle, in whose company he had walked from the camp when the surgeon was summoned to the scene of the murder. At that time the third mate was sober enough, and had appeared greatly moved at what had happened. Indeed, it was Mr. Doyle's impression that Bates had taken to liquor immediately on his return to camp in order to drown the remembrance of the spectacle he had just beheld.

For the present, such were the doubts and difficulties that overhung the case, that the murderer of Mr. Marston remained unpunished, a thing itself of sombre import and evil augury. Mr. Bates, indeed, was deprived of his rank, and solemnly warned that on the next occasion of being found in a state of intoxication he should be soundly flogged; but even this measure, however just and salutary, had danger in it, since it openly threw into the arms of the disaffected an ally to whom there still clung some relics of authority.

If, then, circumstances gave rise to apprehension in a man so solid and "four-square to every wind that blew" as Captain Head, we may imagine how they affected the ladies. It was only too evident to them that Faybur had ceased to be that paradise in which, though cut off from home and friends, they had long resigned themselves to pass their lives. To Edith, indeed, the prospect had been even welcome, but neither Aunt Sophia nor herself had contemplated the possibility of such events as had lately taken place. The place was an Eden still, but not the same Eden to them as it had been before the serpent had made known its presence. The stain of murder seemed to blotch the fairness of Nature herself; the fumes of liquor to mingle with the perfumes of the air; and the dark clouds

of insecurity to gather shape and volume in the azure sky. Only one or two were in all probability connected with the actual crime, but it was only too likely that others were cognizant of it, and it was no wonder that a certain distrust of their own people arose in the two women's minds. This was greatly intensified by the late behaviour of the sailors towards the prince; Edith especially could not forget the spectacle of those furious faces at her window, or the cries with which they had demanded his innocent blood. They would have taken the life of the man to whom she owed her own, not only without scruple, but with eager and tumultuous joy. When she contrasted their bloodthirsty demeanour with the noble calm with which her guest had confronted it, the question, "Which was the savage?" could hardly fail to occur to her; and it could have but one reply.

The prince's behaviour in the tent had impressed her still more favourably. Some of the proceedings had necessarily been unintelligible to him, but he knew at least that the result of them would be a matter of life or death to him; this, indeed, had been clear even to his two attendants, who directly he made his appearance had loyally pressed forward to protect his person.

"Commit no violence," he had said to them in his own language. "Whatever happens to me, if I am killed, tell the king, my father, not to avenge my death." And from that moment he had remained unmoved, like one who, though on the verge of the grave, has nothing to trouble him, his final dispositions having been made.

Edith, who had learnt from him sufficient of the Bredan tongue to understand what he had said, asked him the reason of it, since it was hardly to be expected that her efforts in the direction of religious culture could have taught him the sublime lesson of forgiveness of injuries.

"I told my father not to avenge my death," he said, "because I felt that if I was condemned to die, it would be

done under a mistake." The explanation, though highly creditable, appeared, considering the simplicity of the speaker, a little subtle; there was, moreover, an expression, in his face that was new to her; for it conveyed for the first time the idea of concealment.

"Was that your only reason?" she inquired.

"No," was the quiet reply, "I did not want war to occur on my account, since if it did so, it would set your people's faces against you, because you had been Tarilam's friend."

"That was very good and thoughtful of you," said Edith, with gentle gravity and a blush, which she strove in vain to repress.

Tarilam raised his eyebrows; the precautions he had taken for her safety had occurred to him so naturally that he was wholly unconscious of their chivalry.

"When things seemed going against you, prince, and the horrid men were shouting that you were guilty," said Aunt Sophia a little afterwards—she was curious about the young man's 'views,' and given to sounding him when she got him alone—"did you feel no fear?"

He smiled and shook his head disdainfully.

"But there would be nothing to be ashamed of if you did," she persisted; "death has its terrors even for Christian folk."

He opened his large eyes in wonder.

"When we die in Breda," he said, "there is no more trouble; the Amrac people cannot reach us. The storm may rage upon the water, but it does not wake us; we sleep in peace."

"But you would have been taken away from those who are dear to you—your father, for example."

"It would not be for long; my father is old, and would soon rejoin me."

"And Majuba?"

"Majuba would grieve," he admitted gravely.

"And would not Edith grieve also, don't you think?"

"Would it be worth her while? Who is Tarilam?"

"It was worth her while to risk her life for him when the sailor would have shot him," said Miss Norbury reproachfully.

"Do you suppose I do not remember?" he answered plaintively. "I know a boy who had a tame sea-gull, that had broken its wing; it got down to the water, and would have been blown out to sea and died, had he not plunged in after it, though the bay was full of sharks. It was a generous instinct, but it was not worth while."

"But Edith likes you better than the boy his bird."

"Do you really think so?" His eyes kindled with eager light.

"Why, of course. Did you not save her life?"

"Ah, yes," he sighed. "It was because she remembered that." The light went out from his face; his voice took a tone of hopeless despondency, the meaning of which it was impossible for any woman to mistake.

"My poor prince!" murmured Aunt Sophia to herself sympathetically.

Though a match-maker to the core, she shrank from having any hand in such an affair as this; she was not particular about the eligibility of a *parti*, provided that he was 'nice' in himself, and would be likely to make a good husband. If everything else had promised well, she might even have been inclined to forgive a difference of race in a European, but the notion of an inhabitant of Breda, however princely and attractive, however chivalrous and unselfish, venturing to lift his eyes to Edith was a shock to her. She liked the prince, but it was out of the question that she could give him any assistance as a suitor, even if such help could have availed him, which she felt confident it could not. A girl that had loved Charles Layton would never listen to poor Tarilam: she did not say, even to herself, would never stoop to listen, for she was not without appreciation of his noble qualities; but

the unlikeness of the two men was too pronounced to admit of her picturing the possibility of the one being substituted for the other.

She did not understand that so far as that difference affected the matter at all, it weighed with Edith in Tarilam's favour. If there had been anything in him to remind her of her former lover in the faintest degree, she would not have admitted him to her intimacy. As it was, it never struck her that in so doing she was giving him a certain encouragement. He could never have found the pathway to her heart which Layton had trodden ; every step would have disinterred some dead regret ; but was it not possible that he might reach it by some road of his own ? He was like some untutored mathematical genius who attempts a problem in the schools by a method worked out by himself, less direct and less convenient, indeed, than the authorized one, but which, nevertheless, solves it.

The consciousness of having done her best for him in the late fracas no doubt strengthened Edith's interest in the young fellow ; for if we are inclined to hate those we have injured, it is no less true that those we have benefited thereby establish a claim upon our affections. And yet if it had been suggested to Edith Norbury that she had even begun to entertain a tender passion for Prince Tarilam, she would have denied the imputation with indignation, though not with the contempt which the idea had aroused in Aunt Sophia.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

HALF-MAST HIGH.

AFTER the social storm which had threatened such damage to the little community of castaways, there ensued a calm in Faybur. The murder of Mr. Marston, though its perpetrators remained undiscovered, produced a very deep effect ; and while it shocked the majority very literally, sobered the malcontents. In the latter case, perhaps the fear of discovery induced good behaviour in the most of them, but, at all events, there was no further outbreak, either of drunkenness or insubordination.

The continuance of bad weather still prevented the other natives of Breda from visiting the island, but the two that had accompanied the prince had made themselves so pleasant and so useful as to afford the most lively hopes of concord between their fellow-countrymen and the ship's company. As to Tarilam himself, the falseness of the accusation against him having once been admitted, public feeling veered round in his favour, and his gentle and genial qualities being thus afforded a fair chance of appreciation, he became extremely popular. A few only held aloof from him ; the degraded mate and his three myrmidons, Mellor, Rudge, and Murdoch.

"If the prince comes to harm through any act of your friends," the captain had informed Mr. Bates, with a vigour of language which modern type would be at a loss to reproduce, "and I fail for the second time in bringing the murder home to any one of you, as sure as my name is Henry Head I'll hang you all four"—a warning that had the happiest effect in putting all notion of pistolling the prince out of their minds ; as to attacking him without fire-arms, and in no greater disproportion of force than four to one, they had not so much as entertained the idea of it. Mr. Bates never saw Tarilam without a certain swimming

of the head, produced by the recollection of being held at arm's length over the precipice where a far worthier life than his own had found its end; and the narrative of that experience, told with much personal feeling, if without dramatic artifice, had had a most wholesome effect upon his three friends.

From the sentimental or 'Paul-and-Virginia' point of view, the attractions of such an island as Faybur were manifest. It was quite the place for two young lovers to dwell in, "the world forgetting, by the world forgot," till they both died together on the same day in one another's arms; but it did not afford scope enough for the energies of upwards of a hundred British sailors. There was not enough work for them to do, and too little room for play. They took but limited interest in literature, chiefly from the fact that only a very few of them could read. Under Edith's auspices, Tarilam indeed had become a better scholar than almost any of them except the officers. No one wrote but the captain, who kept a journal which he called a log, and which was wooden enough to merit its title. Conversation languished in the tents for want of a topic.

Under these circumstances it was only natural that since a murdered man, whose assassin had never been discovered, was buried in the place, that his ghost should occasionally be seen. Ghosts are not seen in large towns, but in country places, where monotony and some poor substitute for imagination beget them. With the trifling exception of the *Phantom Ship*, which has something professional about it to excuse its appearance, ghosts are only seen at sea under the most appropriate circumstances, *i. e.* in a dead calm. Captain Head felt it to be a bad sign that poor Mr. Marston did not rest in the grave which had been dug for him in the most beautiful spot in the whole island, but must needs walk all over it, and meet the very last men in the ship's company whom he would have chosen to consort with

during life. Mellor and Rudge had both seen him, and had had fits in consequence. It was whispered that Murdoch was in the constant habit of seeing him, though he was very reticent upon the matter himself; and that Mr. Bates remained in his tent, as obstinately as Achilles, after nightfall, for fear of being addressed by his quondam brother officer, albeit when in the flesh they had not been on speaking terms. If the vision had been confined to these scoundrels, they might have been welcome to it, but others had seen it, or thought they had seen it, and the whole morale of the camp was getting endangered by the superstition. The captain, who suspected trick, rather encouraged testimony in order that he might get to the root of the matter. One evening Willian Dean asked for a few words in private with him.

The gunner was known to be a good fellow, though he had been carried away by the late whirlwind of indignation aroused by Bates against the prince, and was by no means a liar—indeed he had not the imagination for it. “Cap’n,” he said, very gravely and respectfully, “I’ve seen somethink just now.”

“Very good; I am glad you came to tell me at once,” was the sardonic reply; “one likes to have the very latest information from the spirit world.”

“But I am not sure as he *was* a spirit.”

“Oh, this is a new phase. Mr. Marston has come to life again, has he?”

“It was not Mr. Marston, cap’n. It was the Malay.”

“What do you mean? The man that came over with the Bredan folk?”

“Yes, sir.”

“But they can’t come over in this weather?”

“Nevertheless, not half-an-hour ago, I saw him as sure as my name is William Dean.”

“Where?”

“Not fifty yards from the look-out. He seemed to be

coming away from it, though that could hardly be, as the man on duty saw nothing of him."

"Who is the man on duty?"

"Matthew Murdoch."

The captain's face became very grave. "Now just say how it happened."

"Well, I thought I would climb up the cliff to have a pipe and see how the wind lay; it was falling a bit, and the sea going down all round, they told me. When I was within twenty feet of the top, or so, there stood a man by himself, who was looking right down into the camp. He kept himself behind a bush, but I saw him before he saw me, and he was not a white man."

"Why should he not have been one of the prince's men?"

"Because I had left them both below. Moreover, he had only a waistcloth, such as the Malay wore. The sight of him upset me, and I stumbled; the noise made him glance towards me, and our eyes met, and the Malay it was, sure enough. He was off like a bird, and into the bush in a moment."

"Did you run after him?"

"No; I knew it was no good. I went on to the flag-staff; Murdoch had his back to me, but heard me coming. 'They are quiet enough down there, I suppose,' he said."

"What did he mean by that?"

"Well, I guess he thought I was somebody else."

The captain took in all the possibilities at a glance. A spy on the island, and Murdoch in traitorous communication with him—ambush and massacre! "And when he found out it was you?"

"He started a bit; then, says I, 'I have seen the Malay.'"

"'What Malay?' he asks, as quiet as could be; and swore nobody had been near him since he had come on the watch."

"And what do *you* think about it, William Dean?"

"As far as the Malay is concerned, sir, I *don't* think about it; I am sure of it. As to the other, I don't wish to get any man into trouble, though Murdoch's no mate of mine."

"Quite right. You can keep a still tongue in your head, I know. Now, say not a word to anybody, but send the first mate here at once."

Mr. Redmayne was now first mate in Mr. Marston's room, the vacancy caused by Bates's degradation having been filled up by Arthur White, the midshipman. He was but a young hand for such a place, and indeed there was no one now save Mr. Redmayne and the surgeon on whose authority and judgment the captain could rely.

Within ten minutes Mr. Redmayne had started, with eight men armed to the teeth, to make the circuit of the island to search for canoes.

If the Malay was really in Faybur, he must have come by boat, in spite of the heavy weather. Such light vessels as were used in Breda could of course be carried up from the shore and hidden in the bush, but hardly, unless carried by many hands, without leaving some sign of their passage on the sand. To search the island itself before daylight was useless.

A little before midnight the party returned without result. No canoe had been discovered, but at the north end of the island, opposite Breda, there were indentations in the sand which some thought had been caused by the hauling up of a canoe, and others not. They were very indistinct, and the question was whether they had been rendered so by design, or whether the marks were solely accidental. The next day the whole island was thoroughly investigated by scouting parties, who came upon the distilling apparatus which had been the cause of so much evil, and destroyed it; in view of which achievement the expedition could hardly be said to have been labour in vain; but no trace of any alien visitor was discovered.

Upon the whole, the captain was inclined to think that William Dean's Malay was made of the same material as furnished for others Mr. Marston's ghost; but, like a wise man whose motto is "No risk," he caused the night rounds to be more frequent, practised beating to quarters to such perfection that every man was at his post in a few seconds, and enacted that two men instead of one should always keep watch at the look-out.

A few days after these arrangements had been made, Mr. Redmayne and Mr. White had the good luck to come upon what would at a sea-side place at home have made the fortune of the locality; a bay of shells, or rather a bay of sand beneath which lay such a treasure of shells as only a child's imagination could have pictured. They were of all sizes, some of them reaching to such proportion that a single one would in our English gardens have sufficed for a grotto, and of the most splendid colours. In hue, indeed, they resembled nothing so much as those gorgeous sea anemones which line, as with precious stones, the Gouliot caves in Sark; or those too brilliant mushrooms which a benevolent society has painted for us in colours and labelled 'edible,' without finding a human being with the courage to touch them.

The two discoverers, though by no means given to 'gush' over the wonders of nature, were carried by the spectacle into unaccustomed regions of speculation. "How strange, it seems," observed the newly-promoted midddy, "that things so marvellously beautiful, and so fitted to delight the eye, should be covered with sand!"

"Depend upon it, everything is ordained for the best," returned Mr. Redmayne gravely. "Think what a pleasure it will be to Miss Edith to discover them for herself! At the same time I wish—while Nature was about it—that the bay had been placed a little nearer to the camp."

It was, in fact, almost at the northern extremity of the island, at the very place where Edith had met with such

rough treatment from the distillers, where the cliffs were the most sheer and the vegetation most luxuriant. It was nothing of a walk, however, to one like herself, in the highest state of vigour, to which, thanks to the exhilarating climate and her wholesome mode of life, one of her sex could attain, and the attractions of the place, as Mr. Redmayne had foreseen, were overpowering to her. He himself had piloted her to the spot, where her pleasure at the spectacle gave him ten times the enjoyment he had experienced when beholding it for the first time; but she was never weary of visiting it, no matter who were her companions. When it was possible, however, Mr. Redmayne always made one of her escort, a privilege to which, under the circumstances, he thought he had a reasonable claim. The expedition was rather beyond Aunt Sophia's pedestrian powers, and she contented herself with gloating over the shelly treasures her niece brought home with her in such profusion that their little home soon resembled some haunt of the mermaids.

One morning Edith started for 'Shell Bay,' as it was called, as usual accompanied by the prince and the first mate. On their last visit a strange bird of uncommon size had been seen hovering over the spot, and Mr. Redmayne had therefore provided himself with a musket, peace having so long reigned at Faybur that the edict against the waste of gunpowder was in some degree relaxed. At the moment of their departure, however, his presence was required in connection with the storage of some dried provisions; while hardly had he hurried off, when a message from the captain, requiring the personal services of the prince in respect to the yam plantation, which had been established under his auspices, took away Edith's remaining escort.

As both her companions promised to rejoin her, however, directly the public service had been attended to, she saw no reason for postponing the pleasure she had promised herself. They could travel, of course, much faster than

she could, and would probably overtake her before she reached the bay. The road took her by the look-out, where, as it happened, Murdoch and Mellor were on duty. They saluted her respectfully, but she returned the civility with coldness and very hurriedly; she distrusted both the men, and had a firm conviction that the guilt of Mr. Marston's murder lay at Murdoch's door. The sight of him was hateful to her, and dashed her spirits, though it was so far satisfactory to know that his duties for the day would prevent him from coming across her on her proposed expedition. Hardly had she passed them, when one of them cried out to the other; she looked back and saw the flag descending the staff—a piece of carelessness in him who had charge of it which might well have aroused the reproof of his companion. Nevertheless, she noticed on surmounting the next hill—where she stood still a moment to rest herself—that the flag still remained half-mast high, as though the halyards had got twisted.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE BLOW-PIPE.

THE day was a most lovely one even for Faybur, and the sea, which had recently been of milder mood, was showing even more pronounced signs of calm. In a few days at farthest there would be arrivals from Breda: the coming of the king had little interest for her, but she looked forward with some excitement to the visit from Majuba which Tarilam had promised her, so soon as the fine weather should set in. She had a great curiosity, mixed with a certain apprehension, to see what Majuba was like. "I hope," Aunt Sophia had said in her simple way, "that she will not be tattooed everywhere, or have feathers in her hair."

This was not very likely, but it was not impossible, and Edith felt that any trace of savagery in Tarilam's sister would be a shock to her. She was thinking of this and of matters generally connected with her present life, in a manner which some months ago would have seemed impossible; the old life had not passed away from her, for now and again it returned to her with great force and distinctness of regret, but it had been marvellously superseded by the new. Though so much that had made up what we call home was wanting in it, Faybur had become in its way a home to her. This was a substitution less difficult to effect in her case than in another's, since what makes home most worthy of the name had long been unknown to her; the central figures round the hearth in place of father and mother had been those of her uncle and her cousin, of whom, dead and gone though they were, she could not trust herself to think, because they had been her Charley's enemies. Had any one near and dear to her remained in England—thus she reflected upon the matter without daring to say to herself "Had Charley been alive"—this transference of her home sympathies would have been impossible. But, in truth, she no longer looked upon this island with alien eyes. (It did, in fact, hold all she could be said to love; for though we love the dead, it is in another fashion.) Its incomparable scenes of beauty, while they still fascinated her, had grown familiar; her observation of nature had become extraordinarily acute though it fell far short of that of Tarilam. She knew the trees by the music which the wind evoked from them, the flowers by their perfume, and even the herbs by the fragrance they emitted beneath her tread. The sea only was strange to her; it was not like that ocean of which she had had so bitter an experience; those unknown islands in the horizon gave it a certain mystery from which she shrank.

To-day they seemed nearer than usual, and Breda, of course, the nearest. She had no wish to visit it; the idea

of so doing filled her with vague aversion, which the prince, having perceived, had henceforth forbore to speak about his home. It was curious that while he so willingly gave himself up to self-reflection, Edith avoided it; one of the reasons which had caused her to welcome so trifling a matter as the discovery of the shells was that it gave her occupation; she disliked being left, as now, to her own company and her own thoughts. If they reverted to the past, they distressed her; if they concerned themselves with the future, they were equally hopeless, though necessarily more indefinite. She preferred to live in the present; from day to day; without retrospection and without forecast; a state of emotion in direct contrast to that to which she had formerly been accustomed.

She was glad, therefore, since she had not been rejoined by either of her late companions, when she found herself at her journey's end. It was not much to do, but it was better than thinking, to disinter from their sandy beds these splendid shells, almost as valuable in a European mart as precious stones, and ten times more beautiful. Of their scientific names—if, indeed, they were known to science—she knew nothing, nor even the terms applied to their formation; she did not even know the difference between a crenated and a dentated shell; but she was charmed by their exquisite loveliness or their imperial splendour. Some were diaphanous, and, being held up to the light, disclosed secret chambers, "pavilions of tender green;" others, though opaque, resembled pyramids of glowing flame. She was pushing away the sand from a specimen which struck her as being lovelier than the rest, when suddenly she became aware that she was not alone; two figures which had suddenly emerged from the reef of rock to northwards, were making towards her with great speed.

In her extreme surprise she made no attempt to escape, which, indeed, must have been utterly futile, nor was she

very much alarmed, since from the look of the men she took them at first for the prince's two attendants ; but as they drew nearer she perceived that, though dressed in similar attire, and probably of the same race, they were not the men she knew, and were armed with clubs. With noiseless swiftness they ran up and seized her arms, and each placing a hand behind her, began to impel her towards the spot from which they came. She neither assisted their movements nor resisted them, but was borne along in silence ; the whole transaction seemed to her a kind of hideous nightmare, in which she had no volition. As they rounded the reef, however, they came face to face with the Malay, whom she recognized, while beyond him, some quarter of a mile away, was a canoe drawn up on the sand. Then at once it flashed upon her that nothing less than her abduction was intended, and she uttered a bitter cry of distress and despair. It was echoed, or so it seemed, from the top of the cliff, which in that furthestmost bay was as sheer as the precipice where Mr. Marston had met his death, though somewhat more closely hung with creepers. Down this pathless steep was fluttering something winged and white, like a bird with a broken wing. She scarcely recognized it for what it was, so incredible did it appear that any human being should venture to descend that airy steep, yet something within her whispered "Tarilam." She had eyes for nothing save that terrible descent, which was apparently accomplished in safety. Still, against three men, two of them little inferior in stature to himself, what, though he had reached the bottom unharmed, could even his prowess effect. She felt that he was about to rush towards her, and, unarmed, precipitate himself upon her captors, two of whom carried clubs, and the Malay a long knife. Then he would be slain before her eyes, and the sacrifice of his priceless life would have been made in vain.

No sooner did he touch the ground, however, than he

ran like an arrow, not toward herself, but in the direction of the canoe. A cry of alarm burst from the three men, who perceived his object more quickly than she did, and the Malay and one savage darted forward to prevent his carrying it into effect, while the other snatched up Edith in his brawny arms and followed after them at scarcely less speed. The canoe was much nearer to her captors than to Tarilam, and though his swiftness was such that he went three feet to their two, they reached it first. As they stooped to launch it, however, he was within a few yards of them, and, stooping suddenly, took up a huge stone. They dropped their burthen, and the Malay drew his knife from its sheath, and the savage a little instrument from his bosom—it was a blow-pipe.

Tarilam made a feint of throwing the stone at them, which caused them to jump aside from the canoe, at which he instantly aimed it. It struck the frail bark in the centre and shattered it to atoms.

Then he turned back and flew at the man who was carrying Edith. The savage put her down, but twisted his hand in her long hair, by which he grasped her firmly. He looked at the broken canoe and the coming foe and gnashed his teeth; all means of escape were cut off from him, and he read aright in the prince's eyes a sentence of immediate death. Something, however, was still left him—vengeance. He raised his club and was about to brain his defenceless and half-fainting captive, when a sharp report rang out from the cliff top, and a bullet crashed through his brain. He fell, and would have dragged Edith with him but that Tarilam's arm was already around her waist. She clung to him, but he gently untwined her arms, and placed her so that his form interposed itself as a shield between her and a new danger. At the report of the gun, which, it is needless to say, had been thus opportunely fired by Mr. Redmayne, the Malay had instantly dashed across the sands into the woods; but the remaining

savage, while equally recognizing that the fortune of war was against him, and even doubtless crediting his enemies with supernatural assistance, entertained no thought either of flight or submission. A gesture of astonishment at the noise and smoke of the musket, and the fatal effect upon his comrade, had been extorted from him for the moment, but he had immediately recovered his presence of mind, and with malignant deliberation was advancing towards the prince and Edith with his blow-pipe at his mouth. It seemed strange that such a little toy should excite in so dauntless a breast so intense an apprehension as Tarilam now exhibited; not, indeed, on his own account, since he so freely offered himself as a mark for it, but no hen threatened by hawk ever exhibited a more passionate anxiety to protect her little ones than the prince now manifested to screen his charge. His nostrils dilated with terror, his bronzed face took a hue more near to pallor than would have seemed to be possible; he stood like one who sees hovering o'er his head the very angel of death, and listens perforce to the beating of her wings.

Once more the musket rang out from the cliff top, but this time without effect; it was fired from a lower elevation, but the marksman in the act of descending by a zigzag route, as quickly as the nature of the ground permitted, had not taken so true an aim. The savage half turned his head at the report, and on looking again towards his intended victims, beheld Tarilam within ten feet of him, a flying incarnation of rage. The next moment both were on the ground, their hands on one another's throats, in a death-grapple. It did not last long; Edith knew that it could not. She watched it with horror, but not so far as Tarilam was concerned with apprehension; man to man a struggle with the prince she was well convinced could have but one ending. Presently he rose, leaving his adversary stretched motionless on the ground, and staggered towards her. She flew to meet him, and in her turn strove to

support his tottering form. "Has he wounded you, my prince?" she cried, with passionate solicitude.

"No, dear, he has killed me," he answered with a smile. "Tarilam is swift, but not so swift as an Amrac arrow. The woorali poison is in my veins."

"Oh, Tarilam, dear Tarilam, what is to be done?" she cried despairingly. "There must be *some* thing. Think, think! what *can* I do for you?"

"Kiss me," he murmured with exquisite tenderness; "that is all I ask. Kiss me, Edie," and with that he fell fainting on the sand.

CHAPTER XXXV.

IN HOSPITAL.

THE first mate came hurrying up, as Edith, on her knees upon the sand, was covering the brow and cheeks of the unconscious prince with kisses. "He is dying," she said, with a terrible calm, in answer to his look of amazement; "in shielding me from the dart he has sacrificed his own life."

Mr. Redmayne stooped down and drew forth the little weapon which had entered Tarilam's side, just below the waist.

"Such a bodkin as this can never kill a man," he observed, with ill-concealed contempt.

"It has been dipped in woorali," she said.

Mr. Redmayne uttered no reply, but his face spoke for him. He had heard enough of the poison to know that she had pronounced a sentence of death; his handsome cheek burned with shame because he had grudged her kisses to a dying man. He looked round for help mechanically, though he felt that all help was unavailing. The noise

of the gunshots, echoed by the hills, had been heard from a great distance, and some sailors were seen running towards them; amongst them the man Rudge was conspicuous; he was in ill-favour with the authorities, both on his own account as well as on that of the company he kept, and was not wont to show himself useful in any emergency; but now he was the first to run and offer his services.

"It is that scoundrelly Malay who has done this, I reckon, sir," he said, with a glance at the broken boat and the two dead savages.

"Never mind who has done it for the present," was the officer's cold reply; "the question is, can the mischief be repaired? Let the swiftest runner among you go back to camp and fetch Mr. Doyle. Bid him bring wine, brandy—any spirit with him—at once; though, indeed, it is all too late, I fear, even as it is."

"If *any* spirit will do, sir," said Rudge, hesitating, "I have something here. It was given me by them as will make no more of it, because the 'stillery has been destroyed; but as it *was* made, I thought it was no harm to keep it, sir."

Mr. Redmayne snatched the bottle from his hands, applied it to the mouth of the prince, whose teeth, already closed, he with difficulty forced asunder. The crude, strong liquor had an immediate effect upon the patient, into whose cheeks it brought back the ebbing life. It was a case where brandy *could* save one—at all events, for the moment; and but for that timely draught Tarilam would certainly have been numbered with the dead.

It was strange, as Mr. Redmayne afterwards reflected, that the prince should owe his existence to that scoundrel Rudge's disobedience to orders and general complicity with evil-doers; but to those who are greater observers of human affairs, or more given to speculate upon their issues, the circumstance will not perhaps appear so abnormal as

it did to the first mate of the *Ganges*. Whatever his perplexities, he perceived, however, clearly enough, not only that it was no time for reproof and the assertion of discipline, but that the offender had earned his pardon for all offences in the past ; and, indeed, from that moment Mr. Richard Rudge was on the side of 'order.'

Enough men had come up to bear the prince upon a hastily-formed litter upon their shoulders, back to camp, a journey which was necessarily tedious, as they had to make the circuit of the coast. He complained of the want of air, which seemed surprising since a fresh wind was blowing, and Edith walked beside him fanning him with a huge leaf. She spoke not a word, but kept her eyes fixed upon his face lest the expression of a wish should escape her. Whenever he opened his eyes, which he did at longer and longer intervals, they fell upon her, and when they did so his lips never failed to smile. Towards the end of the journey, however, these signs of life ceased to manifest themselves. As they drew nearer home the tidings of what had happened drew many out to meet them, including the captain and the doctor. To the former the news of the Malay's presence on the island and of the attack of the savages were necessarily of the gravest import, but his anxiety on account of public affairs did not prevent his feeling the greatest sympathy for the prince and his condition. "If he lives, Miss Edith," he said, with deep emotion, "we shall all be proud to call him our friend ; if, as I greatly fear, we are to know him no more, he has died like a man, and better than many a Christian."

This speech, intended to be comforting, had quite an opposite effect on the person to whom it was addressed ; not from its reference to the probably fatal effect of the prince's wound, but from its patronizing tone.

In Edith's eyes, Tarilam would not only die, but had lived "better than many a Christian ;" for most Christians

act only "up to their lights," whereas he had acted far beyond them.

Mr. Doyle's grave look and ominous silence gave her a yet deeper pang.

"Is there no hope?" she murmured.

"While there is life there is hope," he answered, then perceiving her young face grow gray in blank despair, he added compassionately, "the proverb is not quite so comfortable in this case as usual, Miss Edith; the effects of the woorali poison are, it is true, almost always fatal, but they are also immediate. An animal as tenacious of life even as the bear has been known to be killed by it in a few moments. That the prince has any life in him at all, therefore proves that the conditions are for some reason or other more favourable than usual."

"Perhaps the poison was not fresh, and therefore less powerful," murmured Edith eagerly.

The surgeon shook his head. "That would make no difference. It has been known to be kept for years, and yet retain its intense activity."

"What is woorali?" inquired Edith with a shiver of abhorrence; the subject was loathsome to her, but she had a dim idea that by encouraging the surgeon's mind to dwell on it he would be more likely to hit on some remedy.

"Well, it is a sort of gum or resin, pressed from the plant of the same name. Of its effect upon the human constitution you may judge from the quantity of alcohol the patient has imbibed since his wound without its affecting him, notwithstanding that he is wholly unaccustomed to spirituous liquors."

"Does he suffer?" whispered Edith. She had scarcely heard the surgeon's words; her eyes, if she had turned them towards him for a moment, had reverted with terrible persistency to the wounded man.

"No actual pain; but he labours under great oppression. The poison affects the respiratory organs, and those only.

You are quite right to fan him. Nothing more can be done till we get him home."

They got him home at last, where they found everything ready for the reception of the patient. Whatever was wanting to Aunt Sophia in other places in the way of judgment or discretion, was never wanting to her in the sick-room. Well might the two women congratulate themselves on having provided for 'hospital cases' in Ladies' Bay, since they were thus enabled to do the best that could be done for one so dear to them.

When Mr. Doyle had made his examination of the wounded man, he sent for both of them. Tarilam was lying on the couch, with his eyes closed, and breathing with great difficulty.

"As you will be my only assistants," said the surgeon, "it is well you should know exactly what is to be hoped for. If our patient dies, it will be literally for want of breath, and we must endeavour to supply it artificially. Bring me your ivory bellows, Miss Edith." This miniature instrument—utterly useless, of course, at Faybur—hung on the wall of the little parlour by way of a drawing-room ornament; some school friend had given it to Edith 'for luck' on one of her birthdays, but hitherto, as the poor girl had often reflected, very little good fortune had come of it. The time had arrived, however, when she was to have a higher opinion of the simple gift.

"My idea is," continued the surgeon, "that by injecting air very gently into the nostrils, so as to prevent its reaching the œsophagus, and then by applying as gentle a pressure to the chest to expel it, we may prolong life till the lungs recover their natural functions. That, at all events, is our only chance, and, as it happens, not all the hospitals in Christendom could prescribe two better operators in a matter so delicate than yourselves."

The two women listened as though the words of the surgeon had been inspired.

Edith brought the instrument, but her hands trembled so excessively that she was unable to follow Mr. Doyle's instructions; Aunt Sophia, therefore, took that task upon herself, while Edith applied pressure to the patient's chest, at regular intervals, as the surgeon directed her. It was the same system now in use for the resuscitation of the apparently drowned, but which was discovered long ago by an East Indian surgeon whom Mr. Doyle had known, in connection with the curare (or woorali) poison. He had himself once before tried it, but without success, but this, of course, he refrained from mentioning. In that case he had only a pipe wherewith to inject the air, a service the bellows performed much better.

For a long time no result followed from the treatment, which was supplemented by the occasional administration of brandy. The feeble flame of life thus strangely fed continued still to flicker, and that was all, yet under the circumstances, as the surgeon was well aware, it was a good deal. Looking at the matter from a scientific point of view, and judging by precedent and analogy, Tarilam ought by rights to have been a dead man. Had he eaten a hearty meal just before he had been attacked by the poison, there would have been (speaking professionally) an excuse for his having survived for a quarter of an hour or so; but this he had *not* done. It was true that his constitution was as wholesome and vigorous as ever inhabited the human frame, but against the virus of woorali that would have availed as little as a linen robe against a rifle bullet. Had the dart struck him, as it had been intended to do, in the chest, or, indeed, anywhere save beneath the waist, nothing could have saved him; but his whirlwind rush had disturbed his enemy's aim, and depressed the course of the weapon. The woorali has this attribute, and this only, in common with snake poison—than which it is far more deadly—that if swallowed it is comparatively innocuous; and except for the injury effected

by the mere passage of the arrow, and which would have destroyed nine men out of ten in his place, Tarilam was in the position of one who had taken the poison internally.

Every now and then the women intermitted their ministrations for an instant, while Mr. Doyle applied his ear to the patient's chest; but the result was always disappointing. He only shook his head and motioned them to go on again; if it was not an actual chamber of death, it was next door to it.

At last Edith looked up and whispered—

“Mr. Doyle, he breathes!”

“Do you really think so?” he answered, incredulously.

“Think so!” As if she had not been listening with ears more keen even than the trained senses of the surgeon for the least sign of returning life! As if with every gentlest pressure of her hand upon his heart she had not been on the watch for the slightest responsive movement! The surgeon's examination was brief, but satisfactory.

“We have got over the worst of it,” he said, with a great sigh of relief, “and shall soon set the poor fellow on his legs.” This, of course, except metaphorically, was very far from being the case; but from that moment the patient began to mend apace. As he did so, curiously enough, Edith Norbury spent less and less time in his society. She, who had literally hung upon his lips, and had passed hours in restoring life and motion to them, now only looked in to ask after his progress; she even left it to Aunt Sophia to read to him, a task she had often taken upon herself of old as his instructress. This puzzled the patient, who, though by no means complaining, once spoke of the rarity of her visits in the presence of her aunt and the surgeon.

“You should be well content with her, my man,” said Mr. Doyle, “though she were never again to say so much as ‘How are you?’ for she has been nothing less than the breath of life to you.”

"That is very true," he answered gently.

The surgeon took it for granted that he had been made aware of the particular service Edith had rendered him, but to Aunt Sophia, who knew better, Tarilam's remark was full of significance.

When the surgeon left, she did not dare to pursue the subject, notwithstanding the natural attraction it had for her. She could not help feeling for the prince, whom she credited with a hopeless passion for her niece, but she had no intention of assisting him. That he should entertain such an attachment indeed, no longer shocked her. She almost confessed to herself that the devotion he had shown to the girl deserved a reciprocity of affection. But, after all, it was out of the question that a girl brought up as Edith Norbury had been, with an experience, too, of a tender passion that had run in the ordinary channel, should 'take up' (as Aunt Sophia expressed it to herself) with a man who had never been christened, confirmed, vaccinated, or even been acquainted with the rudiments of civilization. Edith's conduct since their patient had mended, it was true, was suspicious, but it might arise from a motive the very reverse of that which she hardly knew whether to fear or hope—the desire to put an end to the familiarity which his illness had necessarily engendered.

His two attendants had been already despatched, at some risk, in the canoe to Breda, to summon Majuba as soon as the state of the weather permitted her to join her brother; and Edith would probably be well pleased to see his sister take her place by the convalescent. If Tarilam should speak to her upon the matter which she had no doubt was occupying his thoughts, it would place her in the most embarrassing position, and to divert his mind from it, Aunt Sophia began to talk hurriedly of the first thing that occurred to her, which happened to be the woorali poison.

"I suppose," she said, "you knew in what the dart had been dipped directly you received your wound?"

"I knew before it left the blow-pipe," he answered smiling. "I would have given all I had, directly I saw it, to be like Robert Ray" (the boatswain, a man of exceeding bulk), "that I might have made a shield of myself for Miss Edie."

"Then the Bredans use poisoned darts themselves," observed Aunt Sophia reproachfully.

"Some of them," he said, with a flush. "They know no better," he added; the excuse he always gave for any custom of his people which incurred the disapprobation of the two ladies.

"I wonder why Providence permits the existence of such a dreadful thing as woorali," observed Aunt Sophia, soliloquizing. "It can never intend—that is countenance—the destruction of one's fellow-creatures by such means. What can be the good of it?"

"It is good for kings," remarked Tarilam, simply.

"For kings?"

"Yes! It is not meet for members of a royal house to grow very old, so as to become dependent upon those about them for the smallest service; it brings authority into contempt. When the hand can no longer hold the hatchet, nor the eye martial the warriors, nor the ear listen to the prayer of our people, it is time for us to depart. Then the woorali is good."

"Do you mean to say you kill yourselves?"

Tarilam inclined his head.

"It is the same when we are very ill, or when shame or misfortune overwhelms us. I had a sister who loved an Amrac man; she could not give him up, so she gave up her life. The prick of a thorn, thanks to the woorali, will do it. This is our remedy," he held up a finger, through the nail of which showed a brown speck of infinitesimal size, "in case evil fortune should take us unawares. If

Tarilam were captured by the Amracs to-morrow, they would have only a dead man to boast of."

"What! Do you actually carry the hateful stuff about with you, like a pinch of snuff?"

Tarilam looked puzzled, the metaphor was unintelligible to him.

"Enough to cover a thorn's point only," he answered, as though the crime lay in the quantity.

Aunt Sophia looked at him with horror, almost with aversion. If he had ever had any chance of securing her as his ally in the matter next his heart, he had lost it.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE EXECUTION.

WHILE Tarilam hovered between life and death, strange and stirring events were taking place in the island, of which it was quite as well that the two ladies, occupied with nursing cares, were kept in ignorance. The captain, indeed, had given directions that these matters should be carefully concealed from them. The solitudes of Faybur, which had never echoed to the cry of hound or note of horn, became the scene of a man hunt. Half the camp turned out to beat the woods and scour the hills for the Malay. That there had been treachery at work, in which some of their own people were concerned, was only too probable, and it was felt to be imperative that the man should be taken at once, and the whole truth extracted from him. To this end, orders were given that no fire-arms were to be employed, and no violence used beyond what was absolutely necessary to effect his capture.

Never had the fair island been so completely investigated; its fairy dells and sparkling waterfalls, its lustrous

bowers and archways blossom-hung, were explored with the utmost minuteness, but by eyes that brought with them no sense of beauty. All were filled with indignation against the wretch who had attempted so cruel an outrage against an unoffending girl, and, unprovoked, had brought enemies into their very midst. They moved in a long line, like beaters in search of game, that lengthened or contracted with the conformation of the island itself, but was never so extended as to allow the object of their search to slip through them undescried. It was probable that he would be in hiding at the northern end, both as being most remote from the camp and nearest to any possible help from his Amrac friends, which the increasing calm rendered more practicable, though still hazardous.

No precaution, however, was omitted from first to last. As the hunters proceeded, their line, closing up in the centre, while the flanks which took the bays, where the walking was comparatively easy, pushed forward, took the form of a crescent, and resembled a huge net, the ends of which are being dragged to shore; it was impossible that any one thus enclosed could escape. Every moment the excitement increased, and each man advanced with increased eagerness, in hopes to be the first to set eyes on the man whose discovery had now become so imminent. Suddenly, from a ravine near the shore, there rang out a pistol-shot.

"Steady, men, steady!" cried the officers, apprehensive that the line should break and the men run in.

"Who has been hit?" inquired the captain, appealing from a crag top to a knot of sailors clustered together around some object below him.

"None of us, sir," replied a voice; "it is the Malay."

"Who shot him?"

"Matthew Murdoch."

"Disarm that man and tie his hands."

Ere the captain could reach the spot his orders had been obeyed. The Malay was lying on the grass breathing

heavily, and bleeding from a wound in the breast. When he saw the captain his face lit up with an eager gleam ; it was evident that he wished to make some communication to him. He was unable, however, to speak. Mr. Doyle came up, and, kneeling by his side, applied some restorative.

"What is it you want to say, my man?" said the surgeon kindly; he felt no more good-will towards him than the rest, but he knew, which they did not, that he was dying.

"Murdoch—traitor," murmured the Malay.

"You hear that, men?" said the captain, with stern face. A hum of indignation rose round the group, which had now grown of considerable size.

Murdoch stood with a guard on each side of him, bound, with a face the colour of lead. "It is a lie!" he muttered hoarsely.

"We will hear you presently; this man's time is short," observed the captain drily. "Mr. Doyle will continue the prisoner's examination."

It struck the speaker, ignorant though he was of legal matters, that if he should be called upon to punish Murdoch he ought to have no hand in bringing his guilt home to him.

"In what was Murdoch a traitor?" inquired the surgeon. "Tell us the truth and only the truth."

"Amrac."

"It was with his connivance, you mean, that you came over here from Amrac with the two natives?"

"Yes."

"Then it could not have been for the first time. How often have you crossed the sea before?"

"Two times."

"Then the first time you arranged with Murdoch what should be done on the second occasion?"

"Yes."

"Why did you want to carry off Miss Edith Norbury?"

"Amrac—goddess."

"You persuaded them that she was a goddess, and that the possession of her would be of great advantage to them?"

"Yes." There was a look of satisfaction in the Malay's face, strange indeed to see there at such a time. The intelligence of his interlocutor was smoothing away for him difficulties which in his condition might well have seemed insuperable. If the inquiries were of the nature of 'leading questions' there was no one to object to them on that account. It was justice and not law which all had in view.

"How was it that you and the two Amrac men found out where to find the young lady?"

"Murdoch," answered the dying man, less faintly than before; the mention of the name of the man who had shot him seemed to lend him vigour.

"But he could not have told you that on the occasion in question she should have been alone."

"Flag-staff."

The surgeon looked round inquiringly.

"Who has had charge of the flag-staff this week?" observed the captain.

"Murdoch and Miller, sir," replied Mr. Redmayne.

"Just so; go on, Mr. Doyle," said the captain gravely.

"Murdoch made some signal, did he, by which you were to know when the opportunity for carrying out your purpose had arrived?"

"He did."

"Was there anything else arranged between you beside this particular matter?"

"Amrac army—Faybur."

"Do you mean that an army from Amrac was to invade the island?"

"Yes."

There was a cry of smothered rage from the whole assembly. Every one glanced at Murdoch, and some of them pointed at him menacingly with their cutlasses.

"Steady, men, steady!" cried the captain, but his voice failed for once to restore order.

"He would have had us butchered by the savages!" cried one. "Let him hang at the yard-arm!" cried another.

"Silence, men!" cried the captain imperiously, "unless you would have me believe there are more mutineers than one amongst you. Proceed, Mr. Doyle. We are wasting precious time."

They were indeed. The dying man was almost at his last gasp.

"Was there any one in the island besides Murdoch," inquired the surgeon, speaking even more distinctly than before, "who was assisting you in your designs?"

"Yes."

A movement of sensation pervaded the crowd.

"What were their names?"

There was no answer.

The mental powers of the dying man, it was plain, were leaving him fast; the effort of framing words foreign to his tongue was too much for him. "Look round and tell us whether there are any traitors here besides the man you have mentioned."

The Malay cast his filmy eyes around him. The spectators shrank from that faltering and feeble gaze; if there were any that had cause to fear it on their own account, it is probable that, alive to such a contingency, they had withdrawn themselves out of sight. At all events, his gaze failed in finding what it sought. The Malay's head fell back and the eyelids closed. Then once again his mouth opened. "Murdoch—Murdoch," he murmured hoarsely; and over his stiffening face there swept a vindictive scowl, which settled down on it in death.

By the captain's orders they dug a hole in the sand in the neighbouring bay, and buried him there by the side of the two natives of Amrac, who had shared his enterprise

and his fate. Then they returned home with their prisoner ; the captain, with bent head and thoughtful face, gloomily leading the way and giving the time to the rest of the party, which, as some of those who composed it whispered to themselves, resembled a funeral march.

Arrived at the camp, the sentinels were summoned from their posts by the boatswain's whistle, and the captain, looking very grave and grim, addressed the whole assembly, the prisoner, with his hands still bound, standing within a few feet of him, his eyes fixed upon the ground.

In a low but distinct voice the captain narrated, for the benefit of those who had not been present, all that had just happened, dwelling with great particularity upon the Malay's statements. "That man," he said, "was not bound to us by any community of race or creed ; he was not of ourselves ; he was our enemy, it is true, and intended, by his own showing, to bring destruction upon us by the hands of cruel and savage men ; he would have carried away by force an innocent girl, from whom none of us have received anything but kindness, and surrendered her to a fate worse than death among barbarians. That was not his intention, perhaps, but failing, as she would necessarily have failed, as the possessor of the supernatural powers they looked for, she would sooner or later have become their victim. For this he has paid, and justly paid, with his life. Still, he was not a traitor—as this man is."

Here the speaker paused, and a hoarse murmur of hate and rage broke forth from the throng.

The captain held up his hand, and shook his head.

"The man is here for judgment," he cried, "but not for violence : he shall be punished, but not a finger of yours shall harm him, nor a drop of his blood be laid at your doors. I have no more doubt than the sun is shining that Matthew Murdoch plotted our ruin with that man ; how or where I know not, though some of you—I would fain hope a very few—have cognizance of that matter. Let them

beware for the future, for, so help me Heaven, I will spare none of them. I say, that this man is guilty there is not a shadow of a doubt. Why was it, when he went to seek the Malay, that, contrary to orders, he took a pistol with him? It was with the object—which he carried out—of shooting the man down before he should divulge the secret of their confederacy. Fortunately, however, he lived to do so. We have heard from his dying lips that Murdoch was the accomplice of his villainy; that, while on duty, he used that very flag yonder, which has been planted in the feeble hope of helping us to regain our home and friends, to further his traitorous designs. In almost all crimes there are some mitigating circumstances, but here I can see none; in almost all criminals there is something to be said for them, but not for this man. What is his record since he came amongst us? He was the first to break the law that we had made for our protection in the matter of the liquor casks. He was one of the few who set their wicked wits to work to undo what we had done for the common good by distilling spirits. And now he has betrayed us. A mutineer, a drunkard, and a traitor, what good can be hoped for in such a wretch? What evil may not reasonably be expected? If he plots against an innocent girl, if he joins hands with savages to bring war and ruin upon you—his comrades—what good, I ask, can be left in him? Let him alone, I say; leave him to justice. Officers, draw your swords."

The crowd, goaded to fury less by the catalogue of his crimes than by the recital of his conduct towards themselves, were on the point of running in upon the prisoner. It needed all the efforts of the two mates and of the midshipmen to restrain their fury.

"I do not recall these things," continued the captain, "to arouse your wrath, but to justify my own action. You have elected me to be your chief; it is my duty to see that our little community is not further endangered

by the presence of this scoundrel amongst us. Moreover, he has committed murder."

"Yes, yes; it was he that killed Mr. Marston," cried several voices.

"If so, that is a matter for which he will have to account before the Great Judge," said the captain solemnly. "We ourselves have no proof of it. With our own eyes we saw him shoot the Malay. As mutineer, as traitor, as murderer, I doom you, Matthew Murdoch, to death."

The word was followed by a pistol-shot fired by the captain himself. Matthew Murdoch leapt into the air and fell on the sand—a dead man.

Prepared as was the crowd for the sentence, the catastrophe took them by surprise. There was a moment of 'hushed amaze,' which the chief actor in the terrible scene perhaps took for disapproval.

"His blood is on my head," exclaimed the captain, "and not on yours."

"You have done quite right, sir; if you had not done it we should have done it ourselves," exclaimed one.

"Shooting was too good for him," cried many voices.

"Is the man dead, Mr. Doyle?" asked the captain.

"Yes, sir."

"Then God forgive him, and me also if I have done wrong in killing him. Let him be buried with all decency, but at once."

Deeply moved, the captain turned towards his tent, the men making way for him bare-headed in token of the sympathy they felt for him. This feeling, however, was not absolutely universal. On the outskirts of the crowd two men were discoursing together in a low tone upon what had occurred.

"A deuced high-handed proceeding, that," observed Mr. Bates.

"Better to keep that opinion to ourselves, however," replied Mellor, cautiously. "If our mates here knew what

Murdoch knew, the whole pack would turn on us and tear us to pieces. We may be upsides with them, however, one day yet."

Mr. Bates shook his head and ground his teeth.

"No, we can do nothing in that way now without the Malay. But I'll be even with Captain Henry Head, if I have to wait for a twelvemonth."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"YES."

It was not till the day after the execution (if such it could be called) of Matthew Murdoch that the two ladies were informed of its occurrence, and it made a profound impression upon them. They were not only shocked at the fact itself, and the depth of depravity that it revealed in the criminal, but it seemed to reveal to them an abyss of lawlessness and license hitherto undreamt of, and on the verge of which they saw themselves standing. They recognized for the first time that the kindness and respect with which they had been invariably treated by the sailors must—in some instances, at least—have been feigned; and even in others, where there had been no feigning, how much of it, they now began to wonder, was to be set down to the influence of an authority which itself was built on but slender foundations. The captain and his officers were, they knew, as true as steel; but supposing that the community which had invested them with command should be induced, by whatever means, to deprive them of it! What all women desiderate is a natural protector, and these women, who stood in so much more need of one than most, had none. They were not alone in the world, but worse—alone and *out* of the world, where the forces of civilization

cease to act in their favour. Their present was insecure, their future was pregnant with danger. If Murdoch's treachery had been successful, what might now have been Edith's fate! There was only one person to whom they could look for certain and lasting aid. In Prince Tarilam they had both the utmost confidence; the affectionate regard they felt for him was, they knew, fully reciprocated, and he had a nation at his back. But what a nation! Where his strength lay, lay also his weakness. Welcome and attractive to them as was the prince himself, the two ladies shrank from all connection with his belongings; the young midshipman's account of his friends in Breda, though intended to be eulogistic, had been far from captivating them. They had great misgivings even concerning Majuba, of whose arrival they were in hourly expectation, and what they had heard of her fellow-countrywomen was by no means to their advantage.

Aunt and niece did not discuss these matters in so many words, but they knew what was passing through each other's minds in reference to them almost as well as if they had done so. Narrowed as their lives had become, there was no room for reticence. Having exhausted the sad subject of public affairs, "Do you think that Tarilam will leave us now he is getting better, Edie?" inquired Aunt Sophia, hesitatingly.

"Leave us!" returned Edith, with much surprise, "why should he leave us?"

"Well, when his sister returns—and I don't suppose she will stop here long—he will wish, I suppose, to return to Breda with her."

An expression of pain came into Edith's face; any allusion to Breda was distasteful to her; her companion, however, mistook the cause of her distress.

"We shall miss him dreadfully, shall we not?" she continued. "He is certainly very nice. What a charming disposition he has; what tenderness and what unselfishness!"

"Yes," replied Edith thoughtfully—

"'How young he seems in the old age of Time,
How green in this gray world.'

"I forget where the lines come from, but he always recalls them to my mind."

"Poor fellow!" murmured Aunt Sophia, pityingly.

It was significant that Edith did not ask why her companion pitied him, but maintained a thoughtful silence. The other did not break it, but presently left the room with noiseless step, to attend upon her patient—if, indeed, he could any longer be called so.

More than half-an-hour passed by, during which the girl never altered her position, her elbow on the window-sill, and her face fixed on the cliff, which stood up sheer in front of her. The room was very small and at the back of the house, the larger parlour, with its splendid sea view and plentiful supply of air, being now given up to the sick man. There was nothing in the prospect to divert her reflections, which, indeed, would not have been easy to disturb. At one time she thought she heard a distant shouting and some stir in the neighbouring camp; but it did not excite her interest. There are times when the world without, with all its goings on, seems of no account, and nothing seems real save our own dreams. Suddenly, however, she became conscious that the door had been softly opened and closed. Aunt Sophia then had returned after her visit, and had doubtless found matters progressing favourably, as was expected. As she did not, however, take her seat, and set to work with her needle as usual, Edith glanced over her shoulder with a look of mild surprise, which instantly altered to one of extreme astonishment.

Standing in the centre of the little room, with her hands folded in front of her, her eyes downcast, and an expression on her face of reverential admiration, stood a most beautiful girl. She was dressed in flowing robes of white, which

were prevented from contrasting too sharply with her bronzed and glossy complexion by the intervention, wherever they met the skin, of wreaths of scarlet flowers. In her jet-black hair there was indeed but one, but round her neck and wrists there was a profusion of them; yet such was the good taste of their arrangement, that so far from their causing her to resemble a May-day queen, they had all the grace of ornament. What struck Edith most, however, in the appearance of this beautiful apparition was her extraordinary resemblance to the prince; except for her deficiency in height and length of limb, she might have been Tarilam masquerading in girl's clothes.

"I need not ask who you are," said Edith gently, as she rose and welcomed the new-comer; "your likeness to your brother assures me that you are Majuba."

As she uttered her name the princess fell on her knees, and seizing Edith's hand in both her own, devoured it with kisses. Though there was nothing abject in this demonstration of gratitude, it was nevertheless embarrassing.

"I cannot help thinking," said Edith smiling, "that though I have recognized *you*, you have made some mistake in *me*. I have done nothing, I fear, to merit——"

It was probable that her visitor had but a limited understanding of the words addressed to her, but their meaning was borne in upon her at once.

"I have seen him," she interrupted with simplicity. "Tarilam has told me all about his darling."

It was only too obvious to Edith that the term was one which the prince must have assigned to herself without any thought of its repetition, and that his sister simply used it in default of any other appellation of affection; there was nothing for her, however, but to ignore it.

"Then he told you that I owe him my life," said Edith, steadfastly.

Majuba looked puzzled and smiled with open lips. "He told me that you saved him two times," she explained;

"once from the thunder gun, and once in the council of the warriors."

"Nay, it was Tarilam who saved *me*, first from the shark and afterwards from the Amrac arrow."

"Yes, and from the arrow," persisted the princess. "He told me that you gave him life." Then suddenly she added in a whisper, but with tenderest emphasis, "Yet what is life, my darling, without love?"

Edith blushed from brow to chin. "I do not understand you, Majuba," she said, coldly.

The princess shook her shapely head and sighed. "Oh yes, you understand me. The language of the heart is common to all; even an Amrac girl knows when love is speaking to her. What good is it to have saved Tarilam before the chiefs with your tongue, if you say 'No' with your tongue afterwards, and kill him?"

"Majuba, you give me pain," said Edith, gravely. "It is impossible that your brother could have told you to speak to me thus."

"He never did. Why should there be words between us? Am I not his sister? I can read his heart, as you can read the books," and she placed her hand on one that lay near to her.

"And how is it you talk about reading books and speak the English tongue so well?" inquired Edith; the girl's proficiency, in truth, astonished her exceedingly; but her question was suggested less by curiosity than by the desire to get away from the topic that had been so unexpectedly forced upon her.

"Deltis taught me," answered Majuba, simply, "and since he went away I have had the interpreter for my tutor."

A thought passed through Edith's mind that Master Conolly's teaching might have been of a sentimental character, and had put ideas into the head of this child of nature which would otherwise have been foreign to it.

“I am afraid Deltis sometimes talks nonsense, Majuba.”

“He talks as the bird sings; it is pleasant to hear him. Tarilam, too, used to be happy like the birds; now his heart is sore, and his speech is sad.”

“He has been ill,” said Edith gently; “the poison has injured him. I have nursed him when he knew not what he said.”

“Tarilam knows now,” returned the girl decisively. “He loves you.”

“He does not; or if he does it would make *my* heart sore to hear it.”

“That is what he told me,” rejoined the other simply. “Tarilam would never speak his thoughts to you; that is why I have come to speak it for him.”

“Then you come in vain, Majuba; it is useless.”

A film of sorrow fell like a veil on the girl’s pleading face; the tears were very near her eyes, but she controlled herself by a strong effort. She seemed to be collecting all the scanty stores of argument that lay in her artless mind.

“Breda is so strange to you,” she said, laying one forefinger upon the other, like one who is checking off adverse chances; “we are very rude and ignorant. We must seem to you as the people of Amrac seem to us; alas! alas! we are but savages; it would be, you would say, to stoop too low.”

“Nay, nay, I am sure you are no savage, Majuba,” put in Edith earnestly, “nor Tarilam either. You shall be my sister, and he shall be my brother.”

Majuba shook her head decisively, as though to dismiss that arrangement as altogether insufficient and unacceptable.

“Listen, my darling,” she said. “In Breda there is a district which is *taboo* save to people of the Royal blood. No one comes thither without our permission. We are as much alone there, when we wish to be so, as though we were in another world. Did not Deltis speak to you of it?”

Edith signified that he had done so.

"My brother has only to speak and the king, our father, will make you *taboo* like ourselves. Tarilam will marry you and you shall live alone with him in a world of your own."

Edith shook her head.

"Or, if you prefer Faybur," continued Majuba eagerly, "and the society of your own people, Tarilam will stay here. There is nothing he will not do, or which he will not leave undone, to win you. If you knew him as I do, my darling," she added, with a touch of pride, "it would not be to stoop so very far."

"It is not *that*, Majuba," answered Edith, greatly moved. "There are other reasons, believe me, which make what you have in your mind a thing impossible."

The princess answered nothing, but with a quick movement plucked the blossom from her brow, and all the flowers from her neck and wrists, and flung them in a heap upon the floor.

"Hush! he is coming," she said.

The door opened and admitted Tarilam. His step was slow and his limbs trembled; he had lost flesh during his illness, and his face was worn. He glanced at Edith, and then at his sister. "Leave us, Majuba," he said, in a broken voice. The girl cast one look of tenderest appeal towards Edith, and obeyed him without a word.

"I am come to say good-bye," he murmured in faint tones. "My father has come for me."

"But you are not yet fit to go," she answered gravely. "You must get well and strong first."

"Why?"

The simple monosyllable had a pathos in it which the other in vain attempted to ignore. It seemed to say, "Why should I get well? What is there now left for me to live for?"

"That is a foolish question, Tarilam. Sick people must get well before they leave the hospital. Ask the doctor or Aunt Sophia."

"Aunt Sophia says that since you can never care for me, it will be better that I should go."

"Aunt Sophia had no right to say that," said Edith quickly. It was well enough that she should decide for herself against taking this man for her husband, but she resented its being decided for her; it was a matter altogether for her own judgment.

"Was she wrong?" cried Tarilam eagerly. Then his face fell and his voice faltered. "But, no, I had forgotten Majuba."

Edith looked at him inquiringly. "My sister has been pleading for me, has she not?" he continued gently; "she threw away her flowers in sign that her prayers had been unanswered. It is no wonder. Tarilam has been too presumptuous; forgive him."

He held out his hand with a sad smile. It was not to wish her good-bye, but, as she well understood, in token of amity with which he always associated that unfamiliar act. She hesitatingly gave him her fingers, which he lightly held in his own without clasping them.

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, "there is nothing in your proposal which is presumptuous." Her tone was thoughtful, and gave the impression—or rather would have given it to any one better acquainted than her companion with the English tongue—of carefulness, of weighing her words. She was not greatly agitated by the peculiar circumstances of her position; it had been too long and too often reflected upon for that.

He looked at her with mild surprise unmixed with hope.

"If it be not that Tarilam lies there" (he pointed to the ground), "and that you are yonder" (he pointed upwards), "what is it that keeps us asunder?"

"The knowledge that I do not love you as you deserve."

"Tarilam has no deserts. A very little love would suffice him."

"But, alas! I have no love to give you at all. It is all gone, sunk in the depths of the sea yonder."

"Deltis told me of that," returned the prince softly, and with a reverential inclination of his head. "Death has taken from you the man you loved, and no one can fill his place. When one goes out in our canoes in a storm it is disastrous to lose the paddle; the hand is but a poor substitute, yet it is something. I know that I should be but the hand. You would never love me as you loved the other. It is not to be expected. Tarilam would be content with less than that."

There was no answer. Edith's hand still lay on his own; her silence encouraged him to press it a little. "As to him whom the sea has taken, I know I can never be his rival. He will always have the first place in your heart. I say again, it is but to be expected. Only in one thing I shall not be his inferior."

She smiled faintly.

"What? You think that impossible even in one thing? No, Edie, it is not, for however he loved you he cannot love you more than I do; in that I shall be at least his equal. You loved him very much, and you will only love me a very little; yet my love for you will always be as great as his. It is worthy of you, though I am not. I will not wrong it, therefore, by saying, take my love such as it is; will you take *me* such as *I* am?"

Her reply was almost inaudible. If it could be said to be an acceptance of his offer at all, it was one which seemed to adopt his own self-depreciating conclusions. Edith sighed rather than said "Yes." That modest realization of his hopes seemed, however, amply to suffice for him; he drew her towards him gently and with infinite tenderness, and kissed her forehead. It was less like a betrothal than the sealing of some compact agreed upon indeed by both parties, but in very different degrees of acquiescence.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

FAMILY TIES.

TARILAM stood for a while in silence, looking at his betrothed with grateful wondering face, like one who cannot believe in his own happiness.

Then when she did not speak, but only looked thoughtfully before her, like one who reflects on something she has done, and already half repents of it, he said softly, "If there is anything at any time that I can do to make you happy, be sure it shall be done, Edie. If, because I am dull and rude, I cannot guess any wish of yours, as at this moment, I entreat you to let me know it. If you fear that the expression of it will hurt my feelings, dismiss that fear. If you cannot love me yet, as I hope you will do some day, at least trust in me."

"I am thinking, Tarilam," said Edith, slowly, acknowledging this artless and devoted speech by a fleeting smile, "that for the present I would wish what has just passed between us to be kept secret."

"It shall remain where it is—in Tarilam's breast," he answered, touching it, "till you give him leave to speak of it."

"No; that would be impossible," said Edith. "Aunt Sophia must know and Majuba—they have earned the right to know."

Here she paused. What she wanted to convey was that she wished Tarilam to abstain from making any change in his behaviour towards her till such time as she should think proper to make their engagement public. It was only due to her aunt and Majuba, as she had said, that they should be admitted to her confidence; nay, it was certain indeed in any case that they would soon discover what had happened for themselves; but with respect to all others outside of Ladies' Bay it would be possible to keep

it secret. So far from being ashamed of her lover she was proud of him; she knew that his nature was as noble as his intelligence was keen; that his mind was as full of grace and beauty as were his form and features; but she shrank from what those of her own race, his inferiors, would say of this matter. In this there were many parallels to her own case; a daughter of some house of Mammon, who falls in love with a poor poet or painter, may hold him far above her own kindred in everything that constitutes merit, and yet be conscious of the disdain they feel for him, and recoil from the expression of it; and all the more because she perceives it, from their point of view at least, to be not wholly unreasonable. That, sooner or later, all the companions of her exile must become aware of her engagement was obvious; but there was no need for its immediate publicity. In due time she would tell the captain; but as for the rest, they might very well be left to find it out for themselves. Master Conolly, though he had great claims on her regard, was much too volatile to be intrusted with such a secret; while, as to Mr. Ainsworth and the doctor, and Mr. Redmayne—

“May I tell the king, my father?” inquired Tarilam gently, interrupting these reflections.

The question, though under the circumstances a most natural one, filled her with dismay. In the prince's company she often found herself forgetting that he was a prince, and still less did that fact suggest itself now that he had become her lover. As to the monarch of Breda (though at that moment he was, as it happened, under her very roof), he had for the time been utterly left out of her calculations. So altogether different was the young fellow from his parent, that she seldom associated the one with the other. And yet this amazing personage was about to become her father-in-law. To tell him what had taken place was in all probability to tell everybody; though as to the Bredans generally, it was indeed of small consequence.

If he approved of it they would receive the news with blowing of conch shells, and if otherwise, with some equally simple manifestation of disapproval; but that her own people should first hear it from such a source would be a circumstance very distressing to her.

Tarilam scanned her face while these thoughts passed through her mind as a mariner scans the skies, but with a less fallible judgment, because he had love to guide him.

"The mouth," he said, "of our kings in Breda is closely shut; matters of peace and war they discuss with their chiefs, but things which concern the Royal house are kept to themselves. When I have said to him, 'Father, I pray you not to do this,' never has it been done. He has been very good to me all my life, and denied me nothing save what would have been harmful. The good of his people is, as it should be, nearest to his heart, but after that comes his son. I owe to him all that I possess of good. I should like to tell him—if I might—how happy you have made his son."

"It is only reasonable," she answered gently. "But how can you be sure, Tarilam, that the news will please him?"

He looked at her with an undisguised amazement that spoke more plainly than the most extravagant expression of admiration. "My darling, has he not seen you?" A reply which certainly deserved the smile with which Edith received it.

"He will not now insist upon your returning to Breda, will he?" she inquired. It was but a feeble specimen of that banter which lovers are wont to use to one another, but Tarilam appreciated it to the full.

"He will insist on nothing, dearest," he answered fondly. "It was only because I had been ill that he suggested my returning home, and he will perceive at once that the air of Faybur is, under the circumstances, much more suitable to my ailment."

"Is he really so kind?" said Edith naïvely.

"You shall judge for yourself. He is waiting for me in the next room. May I tell him?"

A faint smile gave him the permission he sought, and with a grateful glance at her he left the room.

Never surely did wooer meet with such reluctance from one who had promised to become his bride, or bore it with more patient tenderness. Tarilam well understood, however, that this did not arise from any doubt of his devotion, or from the absence of at least a reciprocal regard. He had, in fact, the same difficulty to deal with that exists in so many similar instances, namely, the 'incompatibility' which so often exists between the object of a man's choice and his own relations; only in his case the matter was aggravated in an unusual degree. It is not civilization, nor even education, which renders intelligible to us the feelings of other people when antagonistic to or out of accord with our own, but an absence of egotism and a natural love of justice. Tarilam was gifted with both these virtues, and therefore in no way resented Edith's disinclination for his people. On the other hand it was impossible, in his ignorance of the prejudices of race and creed, that he could thoroughly understand her position, and far less those objections which she well knew would be raised by others. However well her countrymen got to know him, nay, even should they recognize the virtues which she had discerned in him, the consciousness of the source from which he sprang would (she felt) be never absent from their minds or cease to cast its shadow.

It was doubtful if even the loyalty of Aunt Sophia would stand the strain that the news of her engagement would put upon it. To her, above and before all, she owed the revelation of it, but it had so come about that she was about to make it in the first place to another, and him the very last she would have chosen to be its recipient. It could not be said that Edith Norbury

repented of what she had just done, but she recognized in that moment of suspense and embarrassment, the commencement of an endless chain of similar situations.

Then the door opened and disclosed the Bredan king. With noiseless step, and a certain tender dignity, he moved to where she stood, and laid his strong hands lightly upon each of her shoulders. She looked up without shrinking into his face, on which there was a smile that well became it.

"Good, good," he said. "My son has chosen well, and Taril is happy."

Edith drooped her eyelids and murmured something, she knew not what; and when she raised them again the king had gone, and in his place stood Aunt Sophia with outstretched arms, into which she flew like a bird to its nest.

"Don't cry, don't speak, dear Edie," she whispered tenderly, as she clasped her close; "only feel that you have done as I would have had you do, and are dearer to me than ever."

It was an observation open to some cavil as an expression of cordial congratulation, but nothing more welcome to Edith's ears could possibly have been uttered. She did not need felicitations but approval.

"I really do love him, Aunt Sophy," she sobbed.

"Of course you do, my pretty one," put in the other quickly; "only not quite so much, you were going to say, as he loves you. The thing is not possible. Any man so devoted I never saw. If he had his will your life would be one rose-leaf without a crumple. You should have heard him impress upon that dear old king that he was not to stay more than two minutes with you. He is a queer father-in-law, it cannot be denied, but I am sure he will be a very kind one; and you're never to see him, nor any friends of the family, unless you please—a most exceptionally favourable arrangement, you must confess. Then, as for

Majuba, she is quite an acquisition to us, and I believe will really be a comfort to you. She only lives for Tarilam, and Tarilam only lives for you, so that you are the mistress of the whole situation; upon my word, dear, all things considered, I think you are a very lucky girl. I do, indeed. Under the circumstances, I think you have done the very best thing you could have done for yourself, and the *right* thing."

"That last should have come first, Aunt Sophy," said Edith, with a faint smile. "It is only natural, however, that you should think I stand in need of some excuse."

"That was not my meaning, dear; no, I think you have done right independently of all expediency, and I am sure that will be Captain Head's view and Mr. Ainsworth's. What a fortunate thing it was, by the bye, that Mr. Ainsworth's life has been preserved to us."

The colour flew to Edith's pale face. "I hope you will not speak to Mr. Ainsworth or any one else at present of — of what has happened," she said earnestly.

"Very good, dear; since you do not wish it, I certainly will not," replied Aunt Sophia; it was a serious blow to her to be prevented from telling such news, under circumstances where even the smallest gossip had a fancy value; "of course you are the best judge of your own affairs, but will it be quite fair as regards other people?"

"What people?"

"Well, of course there is no obligation; you have a right to do as you please; but it would be more merciful to somebody to put him out of his misery at once. Of course, I have always known that he had no chance; but I am afraid he still clings to hope."

"I really do not know who it is you are talking about." The tone of the speaker was incisive and displayed unmistakable annoyance.

"Well, of course I meant Mr. Redmayne," returned Aunt Sophia, apologetically.

"Then you had no right to mean him," was the quick reply; "he has never addressed a single word to me which could be even construed as you suggest; I have never regarded him otherwise than as a friend."

"I am quite sure you have not, dear," replied the other humbly; "but still I thought you must have known—that is, suspected—"

"I have suspected nothing of the kind," interrupted Edith; "my thoughts have never concerned themselves with any such matter."

It was possible that in so speaking the speaker "did protest too much"; it is doubtful whether any woman is quite unconscious of the admiration she excites in a man with whom she is familiar enough to call him friend; but Edith was certainly speaking truth as regarded any reciprocity of affection upon her own part. Upon the whole, however, the imputation was not a circumstance to be deplored; it gave her a certain vigour—if it was but that of repudiation, the energy of a disclaimer—of which she felt herself to sorely stand in need.

There ensued a pause which received a welcome interruption in the entrance of Majuba. She flew, like a school-girl, into Edith's arms and embraced her tenderly. "My sister," she murmured timidly; "now indeed may I call you sister!" then fell upon her knees as though entreating pardon for a familiarity that had possibly given offence. Edith put aside the lustrous hair that hid Majuba's brow and kissed it. "You must not kneel to me," she whispered, "sisters are equals."

"No, no, no," answered the girl, deprecatingly; "all I ask is to be loved by her who has made my brother happy, ah, so happy!"

Then her eyes lit upon the flowers which she had plucked away when she had despaired of such an issue, and with infinite grace and quickness proceeded to replace them about her person.

"Is the king, your father, gone?" inquired Edith, not in apprehension; for, companioned by this simple and affectionate creature, she felt that an interview with the monarch of Breda would be no longer so formidable.

"Oh yes, they are all gone," replied the girl, putting the last flower in her hair with the least touch of coquetry. "Did you not hear the conch shells?"

"Gone! Where are they gone to?"

"Well, to Breda first, I suppose, and then to Amrac," she answered carelessly. "My father has asked the captain for assistance against our enemies, and he has lent him men and muskets. It is possible the fleets may meet this very day, but, whether the contest is by sea or land, it can only end one way; the Amrac people cannot fight against your thunder and lightning. They will never again dare to come to Faybur and try to carry you off to their hateful island."

"But you don't mean to say that Tarilam has gone with the rest?" cried Edith, starting from her chair. "He, just risen from a sick bed, to take a voyage, perhaps to fight! Why, it will *kill* him!"

She spoke with such anxious vehemence that Aunt Sophia hastened to interfere with—"Of course he has not gone, my darling; Majuba is mistaken."

"No, no," cried the girl delightedly; "it is *you* who have been mistaken. Is it not clear, since she fears for him so keenly, that she loves him with all her heart?" The ruse—if such an artless device could be so termed—appeared to her so eminently successful that she clapped her hands in childish glee.

To Aunt Sophia, however, it was not quite so satisfactory; in the first place, it involved a reference to a previous conversation, which she would certainly have preferred to be treated as confidential; and, in the second, the deduction drawn from it seemed by no means convincing. It seemed to her that Edith's anxiety on Tarilam's account

might have arisen naturally enough from her interest in him as a patient. To Majuba this was a reflection that had not arisen. For while love is common to the human race, philanthropy is a product of civilization.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ILL NEWS.

THE alliance between the castaways and the Bredan nation, which had been disclosed to Edith with such startling suddenness, had been brought about by no means so abruptly. The king, accompanied by a few canoes, had landed as before, leaving the main body of the fleet at the back of the island, but his meeting with the captain, though friendly, had been marked with a certain stiffness and reserve. He thanked him for the kindness shown to his son, but once assured of his convalescence did not, according to expectation, demand to be led to him; contenting himself with sending Majuba to her brother, he remained in camp, asking his usual questions about this and that—though not, as before, through his interpreter, whom he had apparently left in Breda—but always with a distrait and preoccupied air which filled his host with vague disquiet. At last the captain sent for Conolly, which he had hitherto forborne to do, lest he should wound the king's *amour propre*, who had evidently a good opinion of the progress he had made in the English tongue, and that young gentleman soon made matters clear, which might have otherwise remained inexplicable.

The real cause of the difficulty was, in fact, what the captain would certainly never have expected, namely, the king's extreme delicacy of mind; the same chivalrous scruples which had on a previous occasion caused him to

keep his fleet out of sight of his new friends, now prevented him from asking a certain favour of them which he had in his mind. He thought it would look ungenerous so to do, since his request, under the circumstances, might appear too like dictation ; and being unable to express it in such terms as would make it excusable, he had forborne, notwithstanding its urgency, to prefer it at all.

“What right have I, Deltis,” he said in his own tongue, “to ask your people to help me to make war against a nation with whom they have no quarrel?”

This explanation was even more acceptable to the captain than he thought it judicious to admit ; wherein it must be confessed that the Bredan king had the advantage of the British captain in chivalry. So far from having no quarrel with the people of Amrac, the attempted raid of at least two of their nation on Faybur was a distinct *casus belli*, and an outrage the captain was extremely willing to avenge, and to send the king a dozen men with as many muskets to act as allies to the whole Bredan power was a method of discharging his obligation—both friendly and hostile—as agreeable as could possibly be conceived. The Malay, it seemed, had quarrelled with his hosts, and found their neighbours, the Amracs, more to his liking ; and no doubt it was to his influence that their conduct was owing. It was by no means certain, however, now he was dead, that they would cease from acts of hostility ; and in any case there would be a great advantage in taking the initiative.

Volunteers were at once invited for the proposed expedition, and the call was almost unanimously responded to. Eighteen, all steady and reliable men, were selected, and since diplomacy as well as generalship might be in request, Mr. Redmayne himself was placed in command. For the same reason, Master Conolly, whose value, by reason of his recent linguistic acquirements, were very much above the ordinary quotation of the article ‘midshipman,’ was also included in the party.

There was a little luggage to be stowed away, since no one knew how long the expedition might last, and some arrangements to be made, so that Majuba's statement that "all had gone" was not quite literally correct. Aunt Sophia and Edith, with their patient, who looked very interesting, but, for a young warrior who was deterred by circumstances from taking part in a fray, in disgracefully good spirits, came down to the shore to add their farewells to those of the rest. There were no presentiments of evil, for a speedy and complete victory could be reasonably counted on for the allied forces, but the parting had nevertheless its pathetic side. It was the first time that any considerable portion of the castaways had been dissevered from the main body.

"You will acquit yourselves like Englishmen, I know," said the captain, addressing his little contingent, "notwithstanding that how you do so may never be known at home." Whereupon they gave him three ringing cheers by way of assurance.

The parting between the king and his son was dignified but full of affection. Master Conolly took a laughing farewell of the ladies, and treated the whole affair as an excellent joke. Mr. Redmayne's tone was more serious, as behoved one on whom a grave responsibility rested. In bidding Edith good-bye he expressed his hope that all would go well with her in his absence.

"You leave me in safe hands," was her smiling reply, which referred, of course, to the captain. No sooner had the words passed her lips, however, than she felt her face aglow, for she remembered that Tarilam was standing close behind her, and that her speech might seem to bear another meaning. Her consciousness of her new relations with the prince no doubt suggested the apprehension; yet it was strange (as she often afterwards thought), since the matter was one on which he could hardly entertain a doubt, that Mr. Redmayne answered, "I hope it may be so." Perhaps

he had seen something in his rival's face that betrayed his victory ; but it is certain that he turned upon his heel, as if to avoid taking leave of him, and stepping briskly into the canoe that awaited him, never turned his eyes to shore again. His departure, after what Aunt Sophia had so indiscreetly said of him—even apart from his manner of leave-taking—was, without doubt, a relief to Edith ; nor—as this time there was little probability of danger befalling him—did she, on the whole, regret the absence of the young midshipman ; he was accustomed to run in and out of their dwelling like a pet dog, and it would have been hard to conceal her secret from his sharp eyes.

From henceforth the inmates of the little house in Ladies Bay might be considered as a family party. If absence makes the heart grow fonder, nearness too, where the heart can bear inspection, has a similar effect, and of no man could it be said with greater truth than of Prince Tarilam, that the more one knew him the more one got to like him.

The nobility of his nature manifested itself in a thousand ways, but in nothing more than in the delicacy with which he pursued, but forbore to press, his suit. It was amazing to Edith how soon she found herself at her ease with him, for she was conscious of being carried into those smooth waters by no great efflux of love. Majuba, no doubt, played a most useful part in bringing this about ; a more unselfish and gentle creature never existed, and though she herself was limited in her affections, and lived, as it were, only for a very few people, she had an unusual appreciation of those natures which have wider range. She even contrived in time to make the topic of the king, her father, interesting to Edith. It was impossible not to admire those simple and generous motives which she ascribed to him with such dutiful eloquence. She painted him with the warmest hues of affection, but not so much as her father as the father of his people. Devoted as she was

to Tarilam, and intensely proud of the adaptability he showed in learning accomplishments which were utterly beyond her horizon, she estimated still higher those qualities of the heart which it was her simple faith he had inherited; she admired him most as her father's son.

"In a word," said Aunt Sophia, after one of these outbursts of enthusiasm, "Tarilam is a Prince of the Blood;" a term the magniloquence of which, perhaps, at least as much as its justice, so tickled her, that she always alluded to him by that title, in spite of Edith's laughing remonstrances. A while ago the girl would have been seriously annoyed by her so styling her lover, which seemed to throw into relief all that was bizarre and anomalous in her own position, and it was significant enough that she could now afford to smile at it.

The definition of the verb 'to be in love,' notwithstanding all the marvellous attributes ascribed to it, is a difficult one; in spite of its monopolizing effect, it is like most other things, a matter of degree, and, moreover, it 'grows upon one,' as the phrase goes, at least as often as it leaps, Minerva-like, *cap-à-pie* from the heart. Perhaps the most formidable opponent to a woman's love is her sense of inferiority in her lover. In most cases this is got over, as we see every day, by her investing him with imaginary merits; but in Tarilam's case there had been drawbacks to which it would have been impossible for Edith, even had she been enamoured with him from the first, to have shut her eyes. One by one these, however, were disappearing; his lineage was now no longer an objection; nay, he even stood higher in her opinion from the very fact of his having broken "his birth's invidious bar," and shown himself so superior to his compatriots. He was fast acquiring knowledge and accomplishments at least equal to those possessed by those about her of her own people, while in all matters to which rivalry with them was now limited, he was literally *facile princeps*.

Even in our own high state of civilization, the gifts of mere strength and fleetness, and of skill in all manly exercises, count for more perhaps than we are willing to acknowledge in a woman's eyes, and these Tarilam possessed in perfection. That he was of dauntless courage she had had proof; nor are youth and beauty, with propinquity, to be entirely left out of our calculations, however ethereal may be the view it is the fashion to take of this tender subject. Aunt Sophia, who was not a bad judge of such matters, presently discovered that though she was never permitted to feel *de trop*, her presence was not so necessary in the way of avoiding embarrassment to her niece, as it had been, and that she could leave the two young people together without much compunction. If her views on the subject, indeed, could have been confined to Ladies' Bay, nothing could have been more idyllic than the establishment there of Tarilam and Edith as man and wife, with Majuba and herself to keep house for them. Unfortunately, however, though their world had become very limited, it was not entirely confined to themselves, albeit just at present they lived as if it had been. Deprived of the services of his first mate, and feeling the absence even of a midshipman from the scanty staff of officers now remaining to him, the captain had his hands fully occupied with the reins of government, and for the same reason Mr. Doyle, and even Mr. Ainsworth (who was always ready to assist authority), had little leisure for paying visits to the ladies.

It astonished them both, therefore, not a little when, as they were sitting at breakfast together as usual, with Tarilam and his sister, one morning, Captain Head presented himself.

All started up to welcome him, for he was a great favourite with every one of them, after their different fashions; to Edith especially he had supplied, as far as in him lay, the place of a father, and in her face there was some confusion, for he had seemed to her to regard

her with a peculiar gravity, which her self-consciousness ascribed to the matter on which she had not thought fit to place in him a daughter's confidence. It was a relief to her that when he spoke he addressed himself not to her, but to the company generally.

"I am sorry, my friends," he said, in a tone of gravity and deep emotion, "to be the bearer of bad news."

"There is nothing amiss in camp, I do hope," exclaimed Aunt Sophia fervently; her apprehension centred for one moment in Mr. Ainsworth; to her just now he was the most important of their fellow-exiles. For though by custom in those days a ship's captain was fully competent, under special circumstances, to join two persons in holy matrimony, she felt in the case she had in mind, where so much of conventional requirement was wanting, the services of an authorized divine to be especially desirable.

"All is well in camp—with those that are left of us," returned the captain.

"Can it be possible then that the expedition has failed?" continued Aunt Sophia—this of course was the natural, however improbable, alternative; but the expression the captain had used—"those that are left of us"—to Edith's ear had spoken of worse than failure, and paralyzed her tongue with terror.

"The expedition has been successful," he continued, "so far as its object was concerned; your hereditary enemies, Prince Tarilam, have been defeated so utterly that they will not trouble you again for many a year, but the victory has cost your allies very dearly. We sent but two officers, as you know, and one of them is slain. Ladies, I know it will distress you very much to learn that we have lost Mr. Redmayne. He has been killed by a poisoned arrow."

Aunt Sophia burst into tears; she was grieved to the bottom of her heart, and yet there was a sense of relief to her in the miserable news. It might have been told of

Conolly, whom she regarded with almost a mother's love; perhaps, too, there was a more selfish consideration, if that which concerns the interest of another can be called selfishness, which rendered Mr. Redmayne's loss the less deplorable of the two.

Though she did not weep, every trace of colour had fled from Edith's cheeks. "I am distressed indeed," she said in tearful tones, in which something of penitence as well as pity seemed to mingle; the thought of the dead man's last good-bye shot through her with a remorseful pang. Then, catching sight of the prince, who, deeply moved by her emotion, was regarding her with wistful eyes, and remembering how he too had nearly succumbed to the same deadly weapon that had slain the other, she suddenly threw her arms round his neck, and burst into tears.

It was a mere uncontrollable impulse, the significance of which, even when she had given way to it, did not occur to her.

Aunt Sophia, however, who, as is often the case, was wont to have her wits about her when others of keener intelligence might have been at a loss how to act for the best on the spur of the moment, at once beckoned the captain into another room.

"Your terrible news," she said, "has utterly upset my poor Edie."

"No doubt," was the dry reply. "Instinct, however, seems to have taught her where to look for comfort."

"You guess what has happened, then; well, it is true that my niece has consented to become the prince's wife. You who have been so kind and good to us would certainly have been the first of all our friends to hear the news, but she has told no one; she wishes for the present to keep the matter a secret. I hope you do not think she has chosen ill; at least you will not be angry with her," pleaded Aunt Sophia, for the captain's face was very grave.

"No, no; I was only thinking for a moment of my poor

Redmayne, though I always knew that he had no chance. Angry with her? God bless her, why should I be angry?" He paced up and down the little room as though it were his quarter-deck.

"Edith's position is a painful and most peculiar one," put in Aunt Sophia gently.

"No doubt, no doubt. For my part, I have every reason for congratulation; for this takes a load of responsibility from my shoulders. It was pressing on me just now almost as heavily as my bad news. In Marston you ladies lost one friend, who would have stood by you to the death, and in Redmayne you have lost another; the few in whom you can really trust may now be counted on one hand, and I myself may be cut off any day. It is most fortunate, therefore, that the girl has found so kind and worthy a protector as this excellent young fellow. It is a pity, of course, that he is not an Englishman."

"Yes, indeed," sighed Aunt Sophia, to whom the recollection of Tarilam's nationality was always painful, however studiously she strove to ignore it.

"Well, there's always a drawback in these matters," said the captain consolingly. "If a girl's lover is young, he is sure not to have a penny; if he is rich, it is ten to one he is a fool; if he's clever, it's only too probable that he will turn out a rogue; and if he is a prince with all the virtues, he's got a father who wears a bone bracelet and feathers in his hair."

This last statement was open to dispute, and even contradiction; but the captain made it with such an extremity of contempt in his tone as presupposed some cause of personal indignation, into which Aunt Sophia wisely forbore to pry.

CHAPTER XL.

THE EXPEDITION.

HOWEVER hesitating had been the approbation which good old-fashioned Captain Head had bestowed upon Edith's intentions, the discovery of them gave her strength and courage. In revealing her secret to him, though she had done so unintentionally, she felt that she had broken the ice, and though she still desired to keep the matter from the ears of the rest of her fellow-countrymen, the idea of divulging it gave her less distress of mind.

For the present, however, there was excuse enough for reticence in the calamity which had befallen the little community. As to the captain, in Mr. Redmayne he felt that he had lost his right hand, and all who had any sense of duty shared his opinion. The body of the young officer had been committed to the deep, but the shadow of his loss fell upon the survivors even deeper and darker than that of Mr. Marston had done, whom they had laid in his grave with their own hands. The young officer's nature had been brighter and more buoyant than that of his predecessor, and to many the isle itself seemed to have henceforth lost some of its sunshine.

Master Lewis Conolly was especially cast down by what had happened, and could hardly tell the tale to his comrades with the calmness and dignity befitting the sole surviving officer of the expedition. With the gentler audience in Ladies' Bay, notwithstanding that it included the prince, he made no attempt to conceal his feelings, which, so far from despising, Tarilam, indeed, appeared to sympathize with in an extraordinary degree. The news of the victory obtained by his people was naturally gratifying to him, but he listened to the boy's narrative with no trace of triumph, and with the sorrowfulness and seriousness of one who counts the cost.

The English had embarked in twelve canoes manned by native rowers, and with the rest of the fleet had reached Breda without molestation from the enemy. There they had put in for refreshments and reinforcements, and were detained by the state of the weather from their projected invasion of the Amrac country. It was not only very boisterous but wet, a circumstance always distasteful to the Bredans, and which was also of great inconvenience to the English from the difficulty of keeping their muskets dry. This enforced delay enabled the new-comers to make some acquaintance with the place and its inhabitants, of which Mr. Redmayne, in company with the young midshipman, took advantage. He thought it might be useful to them in the future, and possibly, if ever they returned to their native land, even of public service.

The island was long, but narrow, and well wooded, and only to be approached from the south and west; in other directions it was surrounded by a reef of coral, in some places as much as twenty miles from the shore, and in none less than six. This reef acted as an immense break-water, and rendered the sea thus enclosed almost always calm, which added to the sense of isolation with which the place impressed its visitors. There was no grain anywhere, and though grass was plentiful, since there were no cattle to consume it, it grew high, and was scorched and burnt up by the sun. There was no quadruped of any kind, and though there were cocks and hens in plenty, they were never eaten unless when in the egg, that is to say, no eggs were eaten when fresh, but only when there was a chicken within them.

The only bird ever heard to sing was the Deltis, whose pipe was as sweet as a flageolet, but curiously enough they never beheld one. The chief food of the natives was yams and fish—of the latter there was a great variety—but that in most esteem was the kuna cockle. The shell of it was enormous, and when diving for it—in which the people

were amazingly expert—it would often take two men to bring up a single specimen. The only luxuries were sweet-meats, of which the natives were as fond as children. The one which had proved so distasteful to the young midshipman was made of the kernel of the cocoa-nut mixed with syrup extracted from the sugar-cane. Their only drink was the milk of the cocoa-nut, and they had no salt. There was no river in the place, but many streams and numberless ponds of exquisite clearness and beauty. Some of these were set apart for bathing purposes. When any man whose business led him near one of these appropriated to the other sex, he was obliged to make some particular ‘halloo,’ which if answered by a female voice, he could not go on, however urgent might be his affairs.

There was never any wrangling or fighting. Whenever a matter was in dispute, it was brought before the king, who sat in public every day to do justice. Every mark of distinction was paid to him; his chiefs approached him with respect, and his ordinary subjects when they addressed him always put their hands behind them, like pupils waiting before their master; even when passing any house where he was supposed to be, they never omitted this action of humility. The king’s behaviour was always gentle and gracious; he listened with patience to all that was said before him, nor did any suppliant seem to leave his presence dissatisfied. When in council, messages were delivered in a whisper through some inferior chief, who, in his turn, addressed the monarch in a low voice, and always with his face turned aside. One punishment for evil-doers—if, indeed, any of such a blameless race could be so called—was ‘the king’s censure,’ which exposed them to universal shame.

The prime minister, who never left the island, was next in rank to the king, and was always first consulted by him. He never bore arms, nor was he distinguished by the Order of the Bone. Neither Mr. Redmayne nor Conolly

were ever invited to his house, as they were to that of the other chiefs ; he remained a mystery to them.

Here Conolly paused in his narration, which, perhaps, had more interest for Edith than he had any idea of, since he was describing a land that in all probability would be her home. He perceived that she was listening with attention, but it suddenly struck him that these details were not only well known to two of his little audience, but might seem impertinent and even disagreeable to them.

The prince, mistaking the reason of his silence, observed with a smile, that the prime minister was the wisest of the king's counsellors, and selected from the whole people because of his sagacity. His intelligence forbade him to accept any mere tokens of honour, as also the gifts which otherwise would have been showered upon him. His life was one of extreme simplicity, and the sole reason why he had not asked the Englishmen to his dwelling was, doubtless, because it was a mere hut, and therefore unworthy of their attention.

Conolly explained that it was not curiosity about the prime minister that had made him pause, but the reflection that what he was saying might seem an intrusion upon the prince's private affairs.

"Indeed," said Tarilam, with a gentle smile, "that is not so, Deltis ; you are welcome to tell anything you have seen among my people, of whom, though simple and ignorant, I have no reason to feel ashamed."

"In truth, he may well say that, Miss Edie," said the midshipman, warmly, "for it is a fact, that not only perjury, but falsehood of any kind is absolutely unknown among them. Moreover, though the Amracs use poisoned arrows, the Bredans do not do so from moral scruples, which, of course, places them at a great disadvantage in their wars with their neighbours."

"The advantage was on our side this time, at all events,"

observed the prince, with modesty, "for we had the thunder guns."

"Also," continued the midshipman, "the Bredans do not think it fair to make an attack on an enemy by night."

Then he went on to describe their weapons: the spears twelve feet long, for throwing, which could be launched with certainty for sixty feet; and the spears, eighteen feet long, for close quarters; the dart and the sling—the latter, a piece of wood with a notch for the dart to lie in; and their daggers made of the sting of the rayfish. Their canoes were all made of the trunk of a tree like the English ash, and those used in war were painted red both within and without, and inlaid with shells. The smallest vessels held five people, and the largest thirty-five; and anything more beautiful than the Bredan fleet when collected for the expedition, was never seen upon the sea. When the weather permitted it to start, it numbered more than two hundred canoes, on board of which were fifteen hundred men. In each boat there was only one spear man besides the rowers. On reaching the enemy's coast a small canoe met them bearing four men, each with a white feather in his hair, in sign of parley and, as the English thought, of submission. This, however, was far from being the case. The chief of the Amracs demanded that certain injuries to their people committed by the Bredans should be redressed, but more particularly that they should give up all claim to the island of Faybur and its present inhabitants, including its goddess, whom it was the fixed intention of the Amrac nation to import into their own country as a guardian deity, to whom they looked for great prosperity. These terms being rejected, the Amrac fleet came out to give battle to the invaders.

With a view to make their victory more complete by waiting till the whole force was engaged, the English reserved their fire, and in the first discharge of arrows Mr. Redmayne received his death wound. On seeing him fall,

the Amrac fleet set up a shout of triumph, which was answered by a discharge of musketry. The effect of it was amazing; the unaccustomed noise and the flashes of the fire appalled the enemy, and when they saw their people drop without apparently receiving a blow, and perceived that they had holes in their bodies in which no spear was sticking, they broke and fled in the wildest disorder. No less than a hundred canoes were sunk and fifty taken. The conduct of the prisoners, some of whom were of high rank, was curious in the extreme. The majority exhibited a stolid resignation, and, untying their hair, which was tressed in a huge bunch at the top of their heads, let it fall over their faces in token of submission; but the few who were distinguished by a bone bracelet on their wrist defended themselves with the utmost obstinacy, and only in one case was one taken alive. This warrior had both his arms broken by musket balls, and when taken into Conolly's canoe never took his eyes from the midshipman's face; in all the pain of his wound, and in the prospect of immediate dissolution, seeming to be impressed by nothing so much as the colour of his novel enemy. There was no slaughter of the prisoners, but all dead, whether friends or enemies, were at once thrown into the sea.

CHAPTER XLI.

THE INVESTITURE.

THE young midshipman's account of the contest, though it had its interest for all, was listened to with very different feelings by the members of his audience. Aunt Sophia regarded it with horror, not only as a picture of savage strife, but as a specimen page out of a book of life with

which it was only too probable they might be one day more familiar. Edith showed little emotion, but kept her eyes fixed on Tarilam, as though the contemplation of his noble face was an antidote to what would have been otherwise revolting, and seemed to find in it the reassurance of which she doubtless stood in need. Majuba, though shrinking from the details of slaughter, wore a look of conscious pride, not only when the naval powers of her people were alluded to, but when the indifference to death manifested by the chieftains of her hereditary foes was dwelt upon.

"We too, you see, savages as you may deem us," her face seemed to say, "are not altogether devoid of heroism."

Tarilam listened to it with grave and philosophic face, as he might have listened to anything else which had a foregone conclusion. He was thinking less of what was said than of its effect upon those who heard it.

"What has happened," he thoughtfully remarked, when Conolly had finished, "may seem deplorable, but it could hardly have been avoided. Even among civilized people I am told that war is not uncommon. In this war it was absolutely necessary to chastise a barbarous race who have always interfered with our peace and quietness. Thanks to the aid the captain lent us, there will be now peace in Breda for years to come."

"There is something in that," admitted Aunt Sophia, less interested in general principles of government than in their practical application to herself and her belongings. She had looked upon Amrac and its inhabitants as merely an item in that long list of 'disagreeables' which she foresaw Fate had in store for them, and rejoiced that there was now at least one the less.

The idea may not have been without its weight with Edith, but her mind was much more made up than that of the elder lady as regarded her future. On the other hand, the claims of personal friendship were as yet far stronger

with her than those of the country she was about to adopt as her own. In her heart of hearts she not only mourned Mr. Redmayne's loss more than that of all the Bredans that had fallen, but grudged it, as too great a sacrifice for the end accomplished. What was such a victory, what was even the national benefit conferred upon the victors, in comparison with the violent death of one of her own race she had so long known and respected? Love, it is said, is beyond all things a partisan; but with Edith it had its limits in that direction. The prospect that awaited her could hardly be said to be a welcome one, but she had resolved to accept it, and almost to make the best of it.

Curiously enough, she found the greatest obstacles to contend with in what seemed matters of small importance. The ignorance of Tarilam's fellow-countrymen—which was after all their inexperience, and which, in the case of the prince himself, and even in that of Majuba, only gave the impression of a pleasing simplicity—affected her like a personal humiliation. The easily awakened ridicule of the sailors at the *gaucherie* and blunders of their new friends gave her exquisite pain. In uniting herself with one whom she firmly believed to be one of the noblest of men, she could not forget the race from which he sprang. The disgrace of ancestry is comparatively a small matter, except to very small minds, because its dishonour is invisible and lies in the grave, but in her case it met her at every turn. Only when alone with Tarilam or his sister could she forget it. Even the behaviour of the king himself, though she had learnt to admire his character exceedingly, filled her with confusion, which might well be termed 'twice confounded,' for she was ashamed of herself for being ashamed of him.

An example of this of an unusually striking kind took place within a few days. King Taril came over to Faybur in great state to thank his allies for the assistance they had rendered him. Nothing could have been more gracious or considerate than the manner in which he expressed

himself. Passing by all mention of his own share and that of his nation in the late victory, he ascribed it solely to the English, and dwelt with regret upon the loss sustained in championing his quarrel. In feeling, as Aunt Sophia justly said, this untutored monarch was as true a gentleman as ever sat on a throne, but in practical matters he could only use such tools as laid to his hand. A philosophic mind might well have regarded the savage pomp surrounding him, and the slavish submission that was paid him by his ordinary subjects, with indifference, or even perceived in it precisely the same elements that make up the more civilized manifestations of respect for royalty; but upon Edith's mind, who was on this occasion an unwilling but indispensable witness of them, they jarred with a sharp sense of pain. The blowing of conch shells, the flourishing of paddles, the prostration of the oarsmen on the shore, and the bated breath with which even his nobles—always with averted face—addressed the king, had something to her of tragedy as well as farce. She could not watch the show as a looker-on, nor even with the comparative indifference of the captain, who on this occasion had a part to play in it himself, which he would very willingly, had refusal been possible without offence, have declined.

The king had announced his intention to award him the high order of 'the Bone,' an honour, as has been said, only bestowed upon the greatest chiefs, and it was the knowledge that this greatness was to be bestowed on him which had made the good captain so satirical when speaking of his Majesty to Aunt Sophia.

The investiture of a Knight of the Garter is not without its humorous features, which a consideration of the merits of the case may sometimes heighten, perhaps, rather than otherwise; but such a ceremony shorn of these externals which have so wittily been said to leave Majesty 'a jest,' was ludicrous indeed. If Breda had possessed a

'Court Journal,' the ceremony would have been thus described.

The king and his nobles stood together apart, while the captain sat in front of them at a little distance ; the king's brother advanced with the circlet and inquired of him which hand he used in common. This question was not, however, to be replied to verbally, which would have been contrary to etiquette. A stone was placed in each hand, with a request that he should throw it to a distance, and the ordeal having proved the left to be less in use, the left wrist was elected for the proposed honour. Unfortunately, however, the captain's frame was somewhat thick-set, and the circlet, not being elastic, like a garter, had to be rasped away to fit it. Even then it would not go on. Strings were therefore attached to the captain's fingers, and his hand having been plentifully lubricated with cocoa-nut oil, the king's brother held him fast by the shoulder, and three nobles already decorated with the order were set to work to pull at the strings. The most profound silence was preserved among the natives during this trying ceremony, and was only once broken by the captain, who, as the magic circlet was painfully compressed on the joints of his hand, was heard to murmur, "Damn the bone !" The exclamation however, was fortunately drowned in the shouts of applause that hailed the success of the operation.

Some men, we are told, are born to greatness ; others achieve it ; and others, again, have greatness thrust upon them. This last was, very literally, the captain's case. He had an Englishman's contempt for all distinctions conferred by any sovereign save his own. He did not look upon the ruler of Breda, however absolute and powerful, as a sovereign from the right mint, or even as a sovereign at all. He had an uneasy consciousness that the spectators of his own nation were with difficulty suppressing their mirth, and he was suffering acute physical pain.

Nevertheless, under these untoward circumstances, he

had to listen with a grateful countenance to the royal congratulations.

"You will take care, I trust," said the king with dignified gravity, "that this token of honour is rubbed bright every day, and preserved as a testimony of the rank conferred upon you; and I adjure you to defend it valiantly and never to suffer it to be torn from your wrist save with the loss of life." A promise, considering what it had cost him to get it on, the captain had no scruple in giving with much effusion.

Edith watched the proceedings with feelings which she was utterly unconscious of expressing in her face, till she heard Tarilam whisper in her ear—

"It is a poor thing to give your captain, dear Edie, it is true; but it is the only thing we have to give."

It was the first time that anything like a reproof had passed the prince's lips, and it touched her to the quick. She not only felt the pity for him that is akin to love, but the keenest remorse upon her own account; his assumption of authority—if so slight and indirect a rebuke could so be called—so far from being resented, was positively agreeable to her, not as a pious novice welcomes a penance, but as a symbol of domestic supremacy. If she did not look forward with effusion to the wearing of the marriage ring, she henceforth felt that the obstacles to her doing so were less serious; that it would slip on, at all events, with less difficulty than the captain's bracelet had done. She was not only resigned to her fate, but, so far as Tarilam was concerned, could even honestly call it her good fortune. Her affection did not indeed stand in need of increase; every day passed in his company seemed to reveal some new vein of gentleness and goodness in his character; it was her philosophy as regarded his belongings that required fortifying, and as it chanced this also had now happened to her at the very time when the tie of personal attachment was drawn tighter than it had ever been before.

The king and his nobles had accepted the captain's hospitality for seven days, and his manner towards her was so kind and delicate, as well as obviously genuine, that she sometimes found herself forgetting that he had the power of life and death, and ate his fish with his fingers. What pleased her most, however, was to see other people forgetting it, and in particular to hear Aunt Sophia speak to her of the monarch of Breda as "that dear old gentleman." What, in short, had first appeared impossible, and then improbable, was becoming an accomplished fact; and though no one outside what might be called the family circle, save the captain, was aware of Edith's engagement, it only remained for her, in mercy as well as justice to her lover—for she was well convinced it was a matter which his intense diffidence and humility would prevent him from pressing upon her—to fix the day on which he might call her his own.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE DERELICT.

EXACTLY a fortnight after the little breakfast party at Ladies' Bay had received the news of battle, it was interrupted by another messenger bearing still more important and utterly unlooked-for tidings. Conolly ran past the open window, waving his cap and shouting something which haste and excitement rendered inaudible, and then rushed into the room crying, "A sail! a sail!"

"Do you mean a ship?" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, starting to her feet in agitation.

"Yes, an English ship making for the island. Hark, there speaks the signal from the look-out," and as he spoke the thunder of one of the great guns woke for the first time the echoes of the surrounding hills.

"She was signalled from the hill ten minutes ago," the boy went on, with breathless vehemence, "but we could not believe our eyes. John Newman has just run down to tell us. It is an English ship, he says, an Indiaman, like our dear old *Ganges*, and now we shall all get home again."

"Heaven be praised!" ejaculated Aunt Sophia earnestly.

Edith dropped her head, and her pale lips murmured something inaudible.

"But you must all come out and see the ship," persisted the midshipman, too excited to perceive the effect his tidings had produced upon the girl.

"In a minute or two, my dear boy, we will be with you," replied Aunt Sophia, evasively; and off he ran, grudging to lose any portion of the spectacle of the approaching vessel. To him it was the harbinger of joy; and so, for the moment, it had seemed to the speaker. The thought of returning to her native land had wholly monopolized her mind. Only when she caught sight of Edith's face was she reminded that to her niece's ears, since she had plighted faith with the prince, this news brought no message of freedom—nay, that it would make her future position even less tolerable by its isolation and the loss of all her friends.

"Edith, darling," she cried, vehemently, "there must be a limit to all self-sacrifice. If you feel the abnegation demanded of you too much for your strength, as well you may, leave the matter in my hands. Let me plead for you with dear Tarilam. What has now happened could not have been foreseen, and overrules what has taken place between you. His noble nature will admit it, and will absolve you from a promise made under circumstances which no longer exist. In sending us this ship, when all hope of revisiting England seemed lost to us, the finger of Providence itself has beckoned you home."

Edith listened till the other had finished, without sign or sound. Except that she kept her gaze steadily fixed upon

Tarilam, she might have been a marble statue. "Do not tempt me, Sophy darling," she answered in the other's ear in never-to-be-forgotten tones; "you make the path of duty harder for me."

Then, with a bright smile that illumined her white face like moonlight upon snow, she rose to her feet, and advancing with firm step to her lover, who sat with his eyes upon the ground as though submissively awaiting her decision, laid her hand lovingly upon his shoulder. The very pressure of her fingers told him at what decision she *had* arrived before she spoke.

The prince sprang to his feet, and with a look of ineffable gratitude and content, clasped her in his arms. "Here is my home," she said, returning his embrace, "which I will never quit till death beckons me away. When you are back in England, Sophy dear"—here her voice trembled a little in spite of all her efforts—"you must think of me as a happy woman. Tarilam has given me his all, and I have given him all I have to give. He will not mind if, now and then, perchance my look is sad with thinking of you, dear, so far away." Here she wholly broke down and hid her face in Tarilam's breast.

"He shall never see it so," exclaimed Aunt Sophia impulsively. "I will never leave you nor forsake you, Edie dear. Even as Ruth clave to Naomi in the old times, so will I cleave to you. 'Whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people;' so help me Heaven, nought but death shall part thee and me."

It was difficult to recognize Aunt Sophia as she poured forth those noble words; her homely face was transfigured by the grandeur of her self-sacrifice. Majuba, who had sat silent and troubled throughout this painful scene, which she only half understood, gazed at her with such awed amazement as might have been awakened in some Delphian girl by the inspired sibyl.

"No, no, no!" cried Edith remonstratively, "that must never be."

"But I say 'yes,'" answered Aunt Sophia; "whom have I to love but you? How can I spend what little remains to me of life, more usefully, more wisely, nay, more happily, than by my darling's side. You may count upon my companionship as settled, Edie," she added with tender earnestness. "And now, Majuba, these two young people had better be left together for a little, while you and I go and see the ship come in."

It was a spectacle to which she felt that Edith was just now by no means equal, and indeed it was one which she herself had need to summon all the forces of her courage and resolution to face. Without setting too great a store on her own value, she could not but be aware that her promise to share her niece's exile had robbed it of half its terrors for her; having once made the offer, it could never be cancelled, and she did not repent it; nevertheless the sight that awaited her in Rescue Bay filled her with many a bitter pang. Every eye was fixed upon the approaching vessel and every tongue was discoursing of it with eager joy. Men by no means given to the melting mood were softened by home thoughts, and shook one another by the hand in wildest congratulation. It almost seemed that all that resignation and philosophy they had shown for so many months had been a mere mask to hide their passionate yearnings for their native land; already the husband saw in imagination his wife welcoming him, long lost, but not despaired of, to his home; the father beheld his child; the brother his sister. The captain looked ten years younger than he had done an hour ago; an immense weight of responsibility had been lifted from his shoulders, and his face flushed with pleasure as he reflected that all this great human family which had been committed to his charge—a trust that had not been misused—were about to be restored to their belongings. Master Conolly

had a telescope, which he pressed upon Aunt Sophia in broken tones. "I do not want it, I don't indeed," he said; and looking at his face it was easy to perceive the reason. He was thinking of the mother who, after all, would see her boy again, and the tears dimmed his sight.

The aspect of the approaching ship was peculiar. She was of large size and had every stitch of sail spread, and as the wind was favourable to her progress towards the island, her arrival might have been looked for within an hour at the furthest, but there was something strange, as even Aunt Sophia's unskilled eyes could perceive, about her steering. She came on without tacking, yet in a series of zigzags. Her nationality was plain, for she showed English colours, but otherwise she was an enigma. She took not the slightest notice of the signals made from the look-out, but blindly staggered on like a drunken man. No living creature could be descried upon her deck, and but that she showed no trace of harm from wind or wave, and rose up high in the water, she might have been taken for a wreck abandoned by her crew.

As she drew nearer, indeed, and, without the least regard to the warnings from the land, seemed to be making for the reef on which the *Ganges* had come to grief, Captain Head came to the conclusion that she was without human guidance, and some sailors were despatched in canoes with the object of boarding her and bringing her into harbour, an operation watched from shore with the utmost eagerness and excitement. It was doubtful whether the interest of the Bredan spectators, who had never seen any craft larger than the two boats belonging to the *Ganges*, or that of the English, was the greater. As the huge ship was steered through the channel into the deep but calm waters that fringed the bay, the exclamations of delight from the natives mingled with a burst of English cheers.

From the closest examination it appeared that she had

suffered no damage of any kind, nor was there a sign of the existence of any infectious disease such as the captain feared might have caused her abandonment. On the other hand, there was not so much as a ship's biscuit, nor one drop of water in the way of provision, and his opinion—no doubt a just one, though it was never corroborated—was that the ship, having been driven out of her course like the *Ganges* by rough weather, had been afterwards caught in one of those protracted calms, which, according to the testimony of the natives, alternated with storms in that latitude, and that the crew, with starvation staring them in the face, had taken to their boats with such small store of food as still remained to them, and worn out by toil and privation, had probably perished.

Compassion, however, for the sufferings of those whom we have never seen, or even heard of—and much less when, as in this case, the matter is problematical and uncertain—is necessarily but of a transitory kind, and such considerations were soon forgotten in the general joy. What to others, it was only too probable, had been a catastrophe, seemed to the castaways on the shores of Faybur a signal act of mercy. They had found, ready to their hand, in all respects save one—that of provisions—the means of transporting themselves to their native land. It was no wonder, therefore, that their self-congratulations were excessive; what was much more surprising was that their guests, the Bredans, should exhibit such satisfaction in what had happened; yet such was the amiability of their dispositions that, notwithstanding the obvious loss the departure of allies so powerful would inflict upon them, they expressed the most genuine pleasure at their good fortune.

“How lucky it is,” said the captain to Aunt Sophia, “that matters have gone no further as regards Tarilam and Miss Edith; though while congratulating you upon what we must needs now consider her fortunate escape, I

cannot but pity the poor prince, to whom we are under so many obligations."

Then Aunt Sophia told him how Edith meant to keep her plighted word, and how she herself had resolved to share her niece's exile.

The captain's weather-beaten face grew tender as he listened, and when she had done he held out both his hands to her. "You are two angels," he murmured with much emotion. "I dare not say what I think of you both, or you would call me an idolater. If our places were reversed it would be impossible that I could imitate such self-denial; at the most I can only estimate it at its proper value. We men call ourselves brave; but compared with women such as you we are but as mice to lions. I will not attempt to dissuade either of you from treading a path of duty so high and so precipitous that it well might make you dizzy to contemplate it; but perhaps the mouse may help the lions."

"You have helped us very much, dear Captain Head," said Aunt Sophia, feebly smiling; "when I think of all you have done for us the tears stand in my eyes, as you perceive; but I fear the time has come when it is fated that we must lose your aid."

"I said 'perhaps,'" replied the captain with earnest significance, and unwilling to witness the tears she could not restrain, he turned away abruptly.

Of course, Aunt Sophia knew he could not really help matters; no human aid could now avert the strong current of circumstances that was hurrying away Edith and herself into regions new and strange; but nevertheless there was something in his words, independently of their sympathy, which cheered her.

She returned to Ladies' Bay and gently chided Edith for remaining within doors while such great events were happening; her absence, as she justly argued, could not fail to be remarked upon sooner or later, and being

associated with that of Tarilam, must needs betray her secret to everybody. That they must now know it soon was true enough, but it was better, she urged, that it should be told by Edith's lips than gathered from idle gossip.

"You are right, dear," answered Edith, with a little flush; "I shall not be ashamed to tell them."

To any one who saw Tarilam as he looked that day, it would have been difficult indeed to associate him with inferiority in any shape. To his native dignity and faultless grace there was added a look of calm content and happiness as different from the bonfire glow of triumph as is the serenity of a star. He looked every inch a prince, but not less a grateful lover. Majuba and he went down to the shore and met with something like an ovation. The high spirits of the English overflowed in all directions, and their feelings of amity towards the Bredans, heretofore but too much mitigated by prejudice and even jealousy, knew no bounds now that they were about to bid adieu to them. The appearance of the two ladies was the signal for a burst of cheering; and they were overwhelmed on all sides by congratulations upon their approaching deliverance, every word of which caused them infinite embarrassment and pain.

All this time the king and the captain talked apart, with an earnestness and gravity that forbade interruption. The difficulty of making themselves intelligible to one another no doubt prolonged the interview, but its duration was something portentous. At last the knotty point appeared to be settled, and the king beckoned to his son to join them, when the conversation was again renewed.

The presence of the vessel in harbour attracted the eyes of all the rest, including even those of Edith. Her mind was full of thoughts unutterable, or which she would have perished rather than utter, as she gazed upon the ship that was to bear all her countrymen away from her for ever; but Aunt Sophia, with the remembrance of the captain's

‘perhaps’ in her mind, threw many a glance in his direction, and trembled with vague hopes and fears. Was it possible, she wondered, that the captain had persuaded the king to use his influence—which was paramount with his son—to release her niece from her engagement? A cruel thought as regarded poor Tarilam, it may be said, and one unworthy of her; but Aunt Sophia, unselfish and self-sacrificing as she had proved herself to be, had the weaknesses of her sex as well as its virtues; nor could it be said of her, in a matter in which, as she thought, her niece’s happiness was concerned, that though she loved Edith much, she loved honour more.

Presently, as she watched the trio, she saw the captain draw aside from his two companions and make a sign to her to come to him, and, quitting Edith and Majuba without a word, she followed him to a quiet corner of the camp.

“You have news for me, I know, dear captain,” she exclaimed excitedly, as he motioned to her to be seated. “Is it possible it may be good news?”

“I rather flatter myself it is,” he answered, with a chuckle. “I told you a while ago, you know, that the mouse might help the lion, and I think I may fairly say that after a deal of nibbling he has done it. I have made a hole in the net that held you and Miss Edith big enough for you both to crawl through.”

CHAPTER XLIII.

DEPARTURE.

THE relief the captain's words afforded to Aunt Sophia was unspeakable. She had so long been accustomed to trust in him, and was so well aware that he never took for granted what he was not perfectly sure of, that she had no doubt of his good tidings. Feeling thus confident of Edith's escape from her troubles, it was not surprising, and, indeed, high time, that her conscience should feel a twinge or two upon Tarilam's account.

"I thank heaven and I thank *you*, dear Captain Head, with all my heart," she exclaimed, "for this unlooked-for mercy; but how does the poor prince bear it?"

"Bear it? How should he bear it? Why, like a man, of course."

Aunt Sophia looked both amazed and alarmed; she began to think that she had been a great deal too sanguine; for if Tarilam had borne such a disappointment 'like a man,' it could certainly not have been what she had taken it for.

"You don't mean to say," she gasped, "that he does not mind our going away to England?"

"On the contrary, he likes the idea. I got the king to put it to him on patriotic grounds. Told him about Peter the Great lodging in Ratcliff Highway, and fired his ambition."

The terrible thought struck Aunt Sophia that the captain's brain had given way under the pressure of excitement. "I don't *quite* understand what you are talking about," she murmured timidly. "I was saying that I feared the poor prince would not much like being left behind."

"Left behind! Gad, I should think not! Why of course he's going with you. Then Miss Edith and he can

have the banns put up in ship-shape fashion and be married by a bishop if she likes. There will be no occasion for Mr. Ainsworth's services, and our people here need not know anything about it. I think it will be better under the present circumstances that they should not. Don't faint, there's a good creature—it's worse than crying. Here's the king."

This was a little ruse of the captain's to bring Aunt Sophia to herself, for in point of fact there was no king, and it succeeded to admiration. The good news she had just received, with its only drawback thus happily removed, had been too much for her. Perhaps she had never quite pictured to herself how great was the self-abnegation she had contemplated in remaining with Edith till the necessity for it was thus done away with. As soon as he saw she was recovered, the captain, with great good judgment, quitted the realms of sentiment and entered into the details of his scheme.

Knowing the king's love for his people, he had pictured to him the immense advantages that would flow to them from a visit of the prince, with some of his attendants, to England. He could rely upon the well-known generosity and gratitude of 'John Company' to send them back to Breda in a ship laden with every article that could be useful to the friendly islanders; and in view of so vast a national boon he had ventured to urge that even separation from his only son would not be too great a sacrifice.

The struggle between patriotism and paternal love in Taril's bosom had been sharp but brief, for his nature was cast not only in regal but heroic mould. He was well aware that if the prince left him as Edith's accepted lover it would be for ever. It was too much to expect that, after once being reunited to her own people, she should return of her own free will to a barbarous and alien land; he knew, too, not only that Tarilam's happiness was bound up in hers, but that he was fitted by nature, as no other of his

race had ever been, to reap the benefits and enjoyments of civilization. His feelings were something akin to those of a father, full of Christian faith, who is about to lose a good and virtuous son by death ; he felt that he was going to a better land, and one more suited to his gifts. The captain from his scanty store of historic knowledge had produced the example of Peter the Great, as one who had left his country for his country's good, and shown a parallel between his case and that of Tarilam. But the fact was that Taril himself was a counterpart of Peter, without his vices ; in all his royal instincts as great a king, and far less, by nature, of a savage.

His will had always been a law to his offspring, and now that both love and duty demanded Tarilam's obedience, it was hardly to be gainsaid ; still, it had not been without many a pang of remorse that the prince had consented to bereave his father of his only son.

Aunt Sophia's gentle nature was touched to the core by the captain's recital. "What was *my* sacrifice, of which you made so much," she exclaimed with enthusiasm, "compared with what King Taril has done !"

"He has helped to restore the average on behalf of my sex in the matter of unselfishness, no doubt," admitted the captain. "I shall now view this ridiculous bone bracelet of his with less dissatisfaction than I should have thought possible. They are noble fellows, both father and son."

"They are, indeed," cried Aunt Sophia. "See, Tarilam has beckoned to his sister ; he means to tell her what has happened even before he tells dear Edith, because it is she whom he is about to leave, and not the other. That is a fine trait."

"No doubt," assented the captain. "Moreover, it gives you the opportunity of getting a word with your niece alone. Take her home at once, and break the good news to her. I envy you the sight of the sunshine it will bring into her pretty face."

There was excuse enough in the occurrences of the day for the tender gravity with which Aunt Sophia took her niece's arm, and led her away from the busy scene. Yet, ere they had reached Ladies' Bay, and before she had spoken a word of what she had to tell, Edith suddenly stopped, and said in a faltering tone—

"I hope, dear Aunt Sophia, no attempt has been made to alter matters between me and Tarilam."

The confabulation between the king and the captain, and afterwards between the captain and her aunt, had not escaped her notice; she had made up her mind as to her future, and was unwilling that the "low beginnings of content" should be interfered with by any new arrangement.

"Not altered, darling, only improved," said Aunt Sophia softly; "as soon as we reach home and are quite alone you shall hear all."

The precaution would have seemed to be unnecessary, for, to the narrator's surprise and disappointment, Edith received her tidings, not only with tranquillity, but with a calmness very like regret.

"Good heavens! you are surely glad, my dear, that we are going back to old England?" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, with amazement.

"Yes, I am glad. I am most sincerely glad. Do not think me ungrateful, Sophy dear, but remember, it will not be 'old England' to me."

In the other's natural joy at their unexpected enfranchisement, she had almost forgotten the reasons, though they had been stated to her and she had admitted their force, which had made exile so tolerable and even welcome to her niece, and this reply struck her almost as a revelation. If she had known that those words, "I am most sincerely glad," were uttered for her own sake, and not from the heart of the speaker, she would have been even more distressed; for the simple fact was that her tidings were unwelcome.

Edith had, indeed, made up her mind to be an exile under conditions as unpalatable, save for the devotion of her betrothed, as were ever offered to woman; but to return to the country of Charles Layton with Tarilam as her accepted lover was an alternative that seemed more distasteful still. The objections to it were innumerable, and they seemed to her in that short instant to gather themselves together and press against it with superlative force; but it was impossible that Aunt Sophia should be allowed to sacrifice herself a second time for her sake, as it was certain she would do if her niece elected to stay. After this one reminder, therefore—wrung from her in that moment of distressed surprise—of the changed conditions under which she was about to revisit her native land, Edith uttered no word of dissent or discontent. If her behaviour evinced less satisfaction than was expected of her, it was set down by the captain to her credit, as being unwilling to exhibit her joy in a case where her lover, in the persons of his father and his sister, was so great a loser.

King Taril and Majuba, themselves so careful of the feelings of those they loved, naturally took the same view. If there was one other who was not so easily deceived, the modesty of his requirements in all that concerned the object of his devotion at least made him easily contented. It was his humble hope that with the greater advantages that would now be open to him, he might in time make himself less unworthy of her.

The feelings of the tenants of Ladies' Bay, including King Taril, now its constant visitor, were indeed in strong contrast to those of the other inhabitants of Faybur; the joy and excitement which possessed the latter, however, prevented them from taking notice of the fact, and the engagement between the two young people—though it was known of course that the prince and his attendants were to visit England—was as much a secret to the whole ship's company, save the captain, as heretofore.

In the mean time the preparations for embarkation went on apace. The vessel which was to carry the castaways home, and which they fitly named the *Deliverance*, had everything on board that they required, except provisions. Just as though they were in London, and were moving into a furnished house, they had only to transfer to it their personal effects. As to stores, in a few weeks she was so laden with supplies from King Taril's bounty, and also with the voluntary offerings of the kindly Bredans, that there was some doubt whether she would be able to leave the harbour into which she had entered with such ease. When the day came for their departure there were at least five hundred canoes in the little bay, full of natives come to bid them farewell, and each with some offering by way of remembrance. In vain were they told that there was no room for more: "Only this from me; only this from me," was the general cry, accompanied by such supplicatory gestures and tearful eyes as almost made the sailors themselves exhibit similar emotion.

The parting between Taril and the prince touched every heart. The king begged him to look upon the captain as another father, and the latter, on his part, assured the king that he would do his best to repay the debt of gratitude he owed him by every kindness to his son.

"I am well aware," were the king's last words, "that in the distant country he is about to visit he will be exposed not only to danger (from which I look to you to guard him), but to diseases that are unknown to us here, and from which he may even die." Here he was silent for a little, restraining his deep emotion with native dignity. "I have prepared my thoughts for this. You will be kind to him, I know, in sickness, but death you cannot arrest. I shall not blame you." Then, turning with a pathetic smile to Edith, he added, "Nor, though you, like Death (and yet so unlike him), are taking my son away, pretty one, do I blame *you*."

Such a farewell between persons apparently so alien and incongruous was probably never seen. Edith and Aunt Sophia were bathed in tears. The captain himself was so moved that he could hardly give the necessary orders for setting sail. As the vessel drew ahead, the natives whose presents had been declined paddled in front of it and threw on board their yams and cocoa-nuts and flowers, with renewed expressions of affection. "We are happy because you are going home," they cried, "but very unhappy to see you are going away." The king stood on the shore, majestic and erect, waving his hand, and apparently unmoved; but it might be almost said that the whole nation was in tears, and it was with difficulty that the sailors themselves found voice for their three cheers.

CHAPTER XLIV

HUMILIATIONS.

THE change in the fortunes of those who manned the *Deliverance* was so great and unlooked-for that it seemed to them like a transformation scene upon the stage, in the reality of which they could scarcely believe. It put them all, save one—Mr. Bates, who still nursed his wrongs and showed in every way he dared his antipathy to the captain—in the highest good humour. They felt like men buried alive who suddenly find themselves restored to fresh air and sunshine; or like school-boys who were going home before their time, in consequence of a providential outbreak of scarlatina. They counted the days that must intervene before, under the most favourable conditions, they could hope to reach their native land, and yet found none of them too long.

To Edith Norbury neither the future nor the present

wore so rose-coloured a hue. Yet the change in her position was far greater than in their case, and, considering what she had escaped, might well be considered more advantageous. The revolution in her fortunes had been two-fold. A few weeks ago she had looked forward (though certainly without effusion) to a new life, the drawbacks to which would have been intensified by backward glances at the old one. She was now returning to her old life, but under such circumstances as made her regard it with disrelish, and even dismay.

It was not only that the prospect of revisiting England awoke a thousand tender and regretful memories which she had believed were laid asleep for ever, and would doubtless have so lain had she remained in exile, but that Tarilam himself lost something of that attraction which, though deep and genuine enough, had, doubtless, owed something to his position and surroundings. He was as gentle, kind, and devoted to her as ever; the gracious simplicity of his nature made him as much the idol of the ship's company as of his own attendants; but he was no longer the enchanted prince who had saved her from the teeth of the shark and the poison of the arrow. The wardrobe of Mr. Marston had been laid under contribution for him, and, in his European clothes, he looked not only as handsome, but almost as much to the manner born as in his native gear. "But for his speech," as the captain said, "he might easily have been mistaken for a young English gentleman of birth and breeding who had spent some years in the tropics."

This easy assumption of her own nationality, which was, in fact, the result of natural grace, was somehow disagreeable to Edith; it reminded her of what she would fain have forgotten; if he did not absolutely become in her eyes (what, being so different, he had hitherto never been) the successful rival of her dead lover, he suggested rivalry where, with all her regard for him, she could not brook it.

What was very curious, his unlikeness to the character he had thus involuntarily assumed, distressed her even more than his aptitude for it. The ignorance which he had displayed in Faybur had amused her, and had even been a source of attraction; it had pleased her to be his tutor. There had been something touching in the simplicity of one so highly placed and endowed with such splendid physical gifts. But on board the *Deliverance*, and still more when the ship touched land, and he was first introduced to the scenes of civilization, this ignorance of the prince, which he exhibited without the least reserve, filled her with vexation and even shame.

Their first port, as it happened, was St. Helena, a modest example enough of a civilized community, but what he saw there—indeed, it might almost be said all he saw there—excited in him the rapture of a child. That he had never heard of Napoleon Bonaparte was nothing surprising—some of his English companions had perhaps but little advantage of him in that matter; but the state of astonishment into which he was thrown by the sight of a man on horseback naturally reflected itself in all beholders. He had never before beheld any animal with four legs, and the spectacle of such an abnormal creature in combination with a man aroused in him—only too naturally—the wildest amazement. To discover that this portent—or at least the equine portion of it—declined to eat oranges, filled him with the liveliest disappointment.

His eye was as observant as his mind, and both were bewildered. With all his good sense it was impossible that, placed in so novel a position, he could have the sense of proportion. The present of a string of glass beads threw him into an ecstasy. He felt that he had in his hands the wealth of the Indies, and besought Captain Head to hire a vessel to take them to Breda, the cost of which he offered to repay by three of them, as the knights of old used to give largesse by tearing off a link of their chains. The

only drawback to his childish happiness at the spectacle of any novelty was that the king, his father, could not also behold it.

Though he had learnt to write after a fashion, he preferred to keep his memoranda in the Breda fashion, which was by knots upon a string. When anything struck him as extraordinary, he made a knot of it, and as almost everything did so strike him, he not only soon came to an end of his string, but, to his great distress, often forgot what had aroused his curiosity. Upon being taken to see a school, and shown its maps and books, he exclaimed pathetically, "Alas ! I am the youngest child here." When asked to exhibit his native accomplishments, he would comply with willingness, and in all those of an athletic nature delighted his audience ; but with the same good nature he would comply with a request for a native song, than which nothing more discordant and barbarous ever fell on human ear. It is unnecessary to multiply the occasions on which his extreme simplicity was manifested. Its exhibition, though treated with the utmost delicacy by those about him, could not but excite the ridicule of strangers, and every smile it evoked was to Edith a bitter humiliation. With woman's art and woman's chivalry she concealed this from the world at large, but from her relative and companion, though she never spoke of it to her, she could not conceal it. Ten times a day did Aunt Sophia wish themselves back in Faybur, and, had it been possible, would, for her niece's sake, have loyally returned thither, though they were within a few weeks' sail of home ; for, as she could not but reflect, if Edith felt her lover's deficiencies even now, how much more distressingly obvious must they become in England !

When alone with him, indeed, the affectionate admiration which Edith never ceased to feel for him was as complete and undisturbed as ever. It even pleased her, as of old, when he came to her in his artless way for

information about this and that; it was only when his shortcomings were exposed to others that they gave her any sense of pain. But in that case the exhibition of his very virtues would sometimes distress and grate upon her. His filial love and duty often caused him to select objects, intrinsically valueless, but whose novelty took his fancy, to send to his father, including even the furniture of the dinner-table; and by way of apology for a choice that seemed to need it, he would explain in his simple fashion how in Breda the king himself ate off the leaf of the coconut, drank out of its shell, and used the husk for napkin.

To the philosophic mind such details would have been of no account, or been even interesting; but Edith, who was no philosopher, shrank from them, nay, she even congratulated herself on the fact that her engagement to the son of this too simple sovereign was as yet unproclaimed, and then flushed with shame at her cowardice.

The captain, as it happened, unconscious of Edith's associations with the place, decided to land at Portsmouth, which was a terrible trial to her. The ship passed within a stone's throw of the very rampart where Charles Layton's interview with her had taken place, and where she had exchanged with him those vows of eternal fidelity. That scene was separated by what might have seemed a lifetime of adventure and strange experience, yet it seemed to her to have taken place but yesterday.

"Your hand is cold, my darling," said Tarilam, who stood beside her, lost in admiration of the ships of war, the batteries on shore, and the fluttering flags in harbour. It was cold, indeed, as Death, and it was with Death her thoughts were busy!

The captain had proposed that the two ladies should be lodged at the hotel till he could communicate with the authorities at the India House as regarded the prince, but they preferred to remain on ship-board. On the fourth day the little party started for London by coach, or, as

Tarilam expressed it, in "a house on wheels, which was run away with by horses;" it amazed him that even at night it should still go on, and that while it went one way the houses, fields and trees should be going the other.

It was arranged that, until Edith's affairs could be looked into, she and her aunt should take up their abode with the captain and an unmarried sister of his in London, who kept house for him when on shore. It was their wish to live in the strictest retirement, which, in Tarilam's case, was impossible. The report of his arrival made no little public stir, and a house was taken for him and his attendants in the neighbourhood, by the East India Company, who provided for their entertainment on a very handsome scale.

His curiosity for seeing things, as well as the invitations, some of them from persons of the highest rank, which he was compelled to accept, kept him much abroad, and although Edith never failed to welcome him with dutiful affection, his absence was, on the whole, a relief to her. What he had to tell her—and which he told with all the confidence of one who is sure of sympathy in his hearer—was unpalatable, if not absolutely distasteful to her. He was eloquent on matters which to her were not only common events, but things in which she took no interest (there were few things indeed that now *had* interest for her); of the kindness shown him by the great, which, in her eyes, was something worse than condescension; or of his popularity with the crowd, which he took for the national goodwill. She was conscious, though she never confessed it even to herself, that while her regard for him was as great as ever, her return to England had been the death-blow to that growing affection, which, had she remained in Faybur, might have blossomed into the perfect flower of love. Every familiar scene awakened memories of the man she had loved and lost, and seemed to reproach her for her infidelity to him. The spring of life was broken

within her, and all her remaining strength was taxed to its uttermost to conceal the fracture.

Fortunately, her hostess, a kind and old-fashioned woman, penetrated with a sense of the superior social position of her guests, left them very much to themselves, and, with Aunt Sophia, Edith had, at all events, no necessity to act a part. She could be silent without fear of questioning, and, even if she aroused suspicion of how matters stood with her, was at least secure from the expression of it. As to her duty of keeping faith with Tarilam, she never wavered in it for a moment; but sometimes in her heart of hearts she pondered whether she would not have welcomed death itself as a relief from the obligation. She had left but few friends in England, her associates having been limited to the circle around her uncle and cousin, with the members of which she had little in common, and, through a mistake on their part, with which she was at the time unacquainted, but the result of which she accepted gladly, these did not now attempt to renew their acquaintance with her.

While in this state of comparative solitude, with thoughts—now dwelling with remorseful regret upon the past, now recoiling with vague foreboding from the future—a misfortune suddenly fell upon their little household, which for the time swallowed up, like an Aaron's rod, her own brood of miseries and apprehensions.

CHAPTER XLV.

BURNING HER BOATS.

CAPTAIN HEAD was arrested one morning, in his own house, and carried before a magistrate upon the charge of murdering one Matthew Murdoch, a British subject. The thing was done without a word of warning, but it did not take him altogether by surprise, nor did he need to be told that the person who had sworn the criminal information against him was one Richard Bates. He knew the ex-mate to be of the most vindictive nature, and that he had nursed his hate to keep it warm ever since he had been deprived of his rank ; while as to the accusation itself, he felt his conscience clear, and that no jury of his fellow-countrymen would think otherwise. But with the women folk matters were very different. For them the catastrophe was as unexpected and tremendous as a thunderbolt falling from a cloudless sky. They had that intuitive dread and doubt of the law, even in the case of the most innocent person, which appertains to their sex, and with much more justification than belongs to some of its other instincts.

Miss Head in particular, who was, of course, less acquainted with the facts of the matter than her guests, was almost out of her mind with terror ; and the spectacle of her wretchedness afflicted them almost as much as the calamity itself. The captain had done his best to comfort them, assuring them of his ultimate acquittal, but had been obliged to tell them that they would not see him at home again, as murder was not a bailable offence, till his trial was over. His parting from them was painful in the extreme, and their joy was proportionately greater when, in a few hours, the good captain returned, though not as they fondly hoped on seeing him, a free man. The magistrate had come to the conclusion that the charge of murder could not be maintained, and that of manslaughter had

been substituted for it. The captain's bail had been fixed at a considerable sum, but so far from there having been any difficulty in finding it, many persons of good position had at once offered themselves as his security. He had never made any secret of the punishment he had been compelled to inflict upon Murdoch, both as a murderer and one whose treachery had endangered the safety of the whole island community, and his conduct had the approbation not only of all upholders of authority but of the public at large. His accuser, Mr. Bates, had had a proportionately ill reception at the police court, so much so, indeed, that he had had to be escorted home.

Poor Miss Head was not only greatly consoled by this intelligence, and by the contemptuous indifference her brother displayed with respect to what was laid to his charge, but found a considerable satisfaction in his popularity. If everything, as she was now assured, was sure to go right, she was not altogether unwilling that his merits should be brought into public prominence, even through a prosecution.

To Edith, on the contrary, this reflection was anything but welcome. Though there was no likelihood of her being called as a witness to anything that had taken place at Faybur, it was only too likely that her name would be introduced at the trial, in which case a publicity would be thrust upon her which would be painful to her to the last degree. Upon the whole, she had made up her mind that should this unfortunately come to pass, she would prefer to return with Tarilam to his own country in the ship that the East India Company were fitting out and loading with every kind of useful present, to carry his attendants back to Breda.

Of this, indeed, she had as yet said nothing—though for very different reasons—either to himself or to Aunt Sophia. In the former case, though she knew that such a proposition would be hailed with delight by her lover, it would necessi-

tate her immediate union with him, from which, in spite of gratitude, and duty, and affectionate regard, she shrank with something more than reluctance; in the latter, she knew that such a course would meet with the most vehement opposition; in fact, it was quite possible that Aunt Sophia, in her disinterested devotion, would insist upon sharing her voluntary exile, a step which she could never permit.

The more she thought of the matter the more this determination grew upon her; it would be held as she well knew, by those about her, as little less than suicide; if a plan so outrageous seemed preferable to her to becoming Tarilam's wife in England—if, in other words, that prospect was so intolerable to her—they would argue that it behoved her to give him up. Perhaps, indeed, it might be so; but in that case to treat him so would be in the highest degree dishonourable, and she preferred suicide to dishonour.

One thing, however, notwithstanding she had come to this conclusion, she had not yet persuaded herself to do, and it became imperative that she should do it, namely, to destroy the mementoes she still possessed of her drowned lover. Had he been alive, and their engagement been broken off, she would, of course, have returned to him those loving letters, those little priceless gifts, which mark, like mile-stones upon the highway, the flowery path of a girl's love. She had also his portrait, drawn by herself on board the *Ganges* before their arrival at the Cape. They were sacred relics, but they were very far from helping the devotee. To open her desk and look at them was terrible to her, and almost made her falter on the road to which honour pointed; she felt that the very possession of them made it harder and more thorny for her. To burn them would be, as it were, to burn her boats; and, by making retreat (even in thought) impossible, to nerve her for her duty; but to do so seemed nevertheless an act of sacrilege.

To keep them was disloyalty to the man to whom she was betrothed ; to destroy them was a wrong to the memory of the only man (as she now knew but too well) whom she had ever really loved.

Whether Tarilam was aware of her possessing these mementoes or not, she did not know. She had certainly never spoken of them to him herself, but in the early days of their acquaintance, when they had been as frank and familiar with him as though he had been a child, it was by no means impossible that Aunt Sophia had done so ; his interest in all Edith had done had been from the first excessive, and it was quite likely that in proof of her artistic skill, or in illustration of her past history, he had been shown Charles Layton's portrait. At all events, it was a possession, however precious, perilous to her own peace of mind, and one which might cruelly disturb even that of her patient and unexacting lover.

One morning, when Aunt Sophia chanced to be from home, she took it from her desk, resolving to destroy it—it would have been wiser perhaps, to have done so, without looking at it, but she could not resist one glance of farewell ; as a remembrance, alas, it was useless to her, for the memory of the man it portrayed was only too present with her at all times ; but to come to the determination of destroying it had cost her many a bitter pang. As she gazed upon it, the occasion on which she had painted it returned to her in its every detail. The cloudless sky, the boundless sea, the quiet corner of the deck in which she had established herself with her painting implements by the side of her lover, his smiling and expectant face—for the moment she lived only in the past ; it was not another day that was passing over her head, but the same day ; but her eyes, which had then been lit with joy and love, were now dimmed with tears ; her ears, that had drunk in his loving laughter, were now dulled to outward things. There was a gentle knock at the door, but she heard it

not; a tender tone that murmured "My darling;" and then a hand was lightly placed upon her shoulder. She started up with a cry of alarm, and beheld Tarilam.

CHAPTER XLVI.

A MYSTERY.

"FORGIVE me for having startled you, dear Edie," said the prince with his quiet smile. "I am earlier than usual. I have just seen a dear friend of ours, Lewis Conolly. He has been summoned as a witness in the captain's trial."

The midshipman had not been in London since their arrival, having gone down at once to Devonshire, where his mother lived; and, under other circumstances, the news of his presence in town would have awakened Edith's liveliest interest. But at present one thought monopolized her mind.

Had Tarilam recognized the picture for what it was? That he had seen it and her tears was certain, for nothing escaped his eyes; but as she put it back in her desk, with as indifferent an air as she could assume, he had made no observation upon it. In any ordinary case, this would only have been in accordance with his usual delicacy of mind. He never pried into her emotions. If, on the other hand, he had recognized the portrait, his very devotion to her would, she felt sure, have forbidden him to ignore it. He would have said something kind as regarded his dead rival, something modest of his own pretensions to fill his place.

This conviction gave her a sense of inexpressible relief, and enabled her to converse with him with a calmness which would have otherwise been beyond her powers. The topic of the trial formed naturally the chief subject of his

conversation. The captain, he said, whom he had just seen, seemed more troubled in his mind about it than he had hitherto been, and less inclined to discuss it. He was not, however, aware that anything new had come to his knowledge to give him apprehensions as to the result. Conolly had spoken of the matter in the most sanguine terms after an interview with the solicitors for the defence; he had to see them again in the forenoon, after which he would do himself the pleasure of calling on the ladies.

Again and again during the interview did Edith reproach herself for her lack of interest in what on every ground of gratitude and regard should have been of so much importance to her; if the captain had been in greater danger it would, she felt a just confidence, have placed her own affairs in the background, but as matters stood her mind was preoccupied with them. This did not arise, however, from personal considerations; though her hand lay without response in that of her companion, though she answered him only by monosyllables, it was of him she was thinking, and not of herself, or only of herself as far as her future was concerned with his. In a few weeks, in a month at furthest, if her purpose of returning with him should be carried out, she would become this man's wife. With that picture she had just put away in her thoughts, instead of his own loving image, would it be right in her so to do? Was it fair to *him*? It was with this scruple that she was occupied.

It was certain that Tarilam was not ignorant of the effect which the revisiting her own country had had upon Edith's feelings, and, doubtless, to this cause he assigned her present emotion. He asked so little of her in return for his complete devotion that almost anything seemed to suffice him. Should she confess all, it would, she was convinced, only make him miserable upon her account, not upon his own. He was content to be second in the matrimonial race, and even a bad second, but absolutely to say

him 'nay' would be, she felt, to break his heart. Thinking of all these things, she parted from him with more of tenderness than usual, and he from her with a corresponding show of grateful affection.

The quiet household had of late been much disturbed by callers, who came upon business in connection with the coming trial, and that morning they seemed to be more numerous than ever. Once Edith heard the captain's voice raised in a higher tone than was usual with him, after which there was a sudden silence, and once, as she was almost certain, the voice of Lewis Conolly. As he did not come to her, however, this could hardly be, and in her own importunate reflections the circumstance was soon forgotten; she thought it strange that Aunt Sophia's return was so long deferred, but that too passed away from her mind, and when at last her relative made her appearance there was a look in her face that banished all thoughts of her delay.

"What has happened, Aunt Sophia?" cried Edith, the chord of self vanishing in an instant, at the spectacle of such panic and sorrow in another; "there are tears in your kind eyes. I am sure that you have heard ill news."

"No, no, it is nothing," she answered hastily. "I am a little tired and upset, that's all."

"You have seen an old friend?"

"Who told you so?" faltered Aunt Sophia. The inquiry was one of indifference, but not the tone, which was faint and even awe-struck.

"Well, I guessed it," said Edith cheerfully. "You had always a weakness for Master Conolly, I know. Tarilam told me he was coming to see *me*; and, indeed, an hour ago or so, I thought I heard his voice downstairs; but as you were not with me, I suppose he did not think it worth his while."

"Yes, that was it, no doubt," replied Aunt Sophia.

Her assent to so monstrous an explanation—for, as we know, the midshipman was devoted to Edith—was obviously mechanical. She looked the very picture of woe and terror.

"Aunt Sophia, I *must* know what has happened," exclaimed Edith; "whatever it is I can bear it better armed in the armour of my own selfish thoughts than you have done. Tarilam is well, I know; I see you alive and well; the captain is safe within doors; and that is all my world, save Conolly. Some misfortune then must have befallen the dear boy. Why did he not come to see me?"

"He was very much cut up and distressed by his interview with the captain, and he did not wish you to be a witness to his weakness."

Edith shook her head. "You are concealing something from me," she said. "If there is sorrow in this house it is fit and right that I should share it." She rose from her seat, and moved towards the door.

"For heaven's sake, Edie, stay where you are!" cried Aunt Sophia, seizing her by the arm. At the same moment the front door closed with a clang; some one had quitted the house. Edith quietly released herself from Aunt Sophia's hold, who, indeed, no longer sought to restrain her, and went out to the top of the stairs. "Captain Head," she called over the banisters, "will you let me have a word with you?"

There had been voices below stairs when she spoke, but there now fell a sudden pause. Then the captain's cheery tones replied, "By all means, Miss Edith." There was, nevertheless, a hesitation in his heavy step which did not escape her notice. His face had a smile upon it, but also a look of anxiety, as she thought, and even of pain.

"Where is Mr. Conolly?" were her first words.

The smile broadened on the other's honest features. "Why, in this very house," he answered. "The young

dog came on purpose to see you, but he had a fit of shyness. Come up, sir!" he bellowed out as if he were on ship-board; "Miss Edith knows you are here, and wants to see you."

"Of course I want to see him," said Edith. Then the midshipman's light step, but surely slower and with less of spring in it than usual, came up the stairs.

"You naughty boy, why have I need to send for you?" she exclaimed, holding out both her hands.

"I have been with the captain and his lawyers," answered the boy, glancing apprehensively at his chief.

"And I suppose they want you to commit perjury," said Edith, smiling. "If that is so you must not look so pale and frightened when you are in the witness-box. It was very good of you to write to me about your mother. I would have given a thousand pounds to have seen your first meeting. Yet home doesn't seem to suit you, my dear boy. You don't look half so well as you did in Faybur."

"He doesn't like the notion of going into court," explained the captain. "My counsel, Mr. What's-his-name——"

"Baring," interposed Aunt Sophia.

"Just so. Mr. Baring has been impressing so strongly upon him the importance of his evidence that I believe he thinks he is going to be tried instead of me."

"That seems very injudicious," remarked Edith. "Who is this Mr. Baring? I thought you had engaged Mr. Collins."

"That is our leader; Mr. Baring is the junior. Our solicitor has the greatest confidence in him."

There was a long silence. In spite of what had been told her, Edith had an uncomfortable feeling still, derived from the manner of her companions that there was something amiss. This could now, she felt sure, be connected with the trial alone, from which, perhaps, this Mr. Baring had expressed an opinion that she should not be absent.

The testimony of a woman—and of a young one—she had often heard had always a certain weight with a jury.

"I hope, dear Captain Head," she said, "that out of consideration for my feelings you are not throwing a chance away. It would be idle to say that to have to appear in court would not be distressing to me, but what would pain me ten times more would be the reflection that my absence from the witness-box had been a disadvantage to you."

"It is absolutely out of the question," put in Aunt Sophia positively.

"I am speaking for myself, Sophy," continued Edith quietly; "there would, I can easily understand, be no need for both of us to give evidence, but so far as I am concerned my poor services are unreservedly at your disposal."

"No, no, no," cried Aunt Sophia.

"I am speaking to Captain Head," continued Edith decisively. "I am quite sure there is a hitch somewhere, and in some matter in which I am concerned. Unless you assure me, upon your honour, that Mr. Baring has not advised my being subpœnaed, I shall write to your solicitor and demand to be put in the witness-box."

"I thank you, dear Miss Edith, from the bottom of my heart," said the captain, greatly moved; "but upon my honour Mr. Baring never expressed any such opinion."

"But he said *something* about me. Mr. Conolly, you were present, and will tell me the truth. What did he say?"

If ever a midshipman looked embarrassed it was Master Lewis Conolly. He glanced at the captain, he glanced at Aunt Sophia, he glanced at the ceiling. "Well, he talked a great deal about you, Miss Edith, as indeed we all did," at last he stammered.

"But about the trial?"

"He never said one word about you in connection with

the trial at all." In a midshipman's theology there is said to be an eleventh commandment. "Tell a lie, tell a good one, and stick to it." Had Edith heard of this dogma she would perhaps have given it a personal application, but fortunately she had not. The lad had a fearless and open countenance, which is also a great advantage in such cases. There is a colour, too, which rises to the cheek of fibbing youth when his word is doubted that may well be mistaken by any one short of a school-master for virtuous indignation.

"You are a gentleman, and would not deceive a poor girl, I know, who is putting her trust in you," said Edith pathetically.

"Indeed, indeed, I would not," replied the lad with precocious naturalness. Whether he was lying or not, even the intelligent reader, nay, even the author himself, had he been present, could not have told for certain. It is enough to say that Edith Norbury believed him and was satisfied.

It is said, and with more truth than belongs to similar observations, which too often have their source in cynicism and even brutality, that among the few advantages the poor have over the rich is that the necessity for labour prevents them dwelling upon their domestic griefs. The thoughts which are occupied in decking the graves of their dead darlings with flowers in the one case, must be devoted in the other to providing for the living little ones that are still left to them. They have no time to dwell upon their loss. Something akin to this cruel mercy takes place when some bitter sorrow of our own is broken in upon by a calamity, especially if it be short and sharp, that threatens a friend. Until that has been settled one way or another we cease to brood upon our private woe.

Thus, in the approaching trial of Captain Head, Edith Norbury found a partial mitigation of her own distress of mind. She discussed it with Aunt Sophia in all its bearings, and in her interest and anxiety omitted to notice how

much of the talk fell to her share, and how little to that of her companion. What helped her very much was the decision she had finally arrived at to leave England as Tarilam's wife. To do so before the captain's fate had been decided upon, would, she felt, have been impossible; but there were, as usual, delays in fitting out the vessel that was to take his attendants back to their own country; and though the time would be but short to make arrangements for her marriage, in the mean time it would be sufficient. The shorter, indeed, it was, now that she had nerved herself to go through with it, the better. The chief person concerned would hail her resolve with rapture, and the less opportunity Aunt Sophia should have to oppose her plan the less pain she herself would suffer in carrying it out. She had burnt Charles Layton's picture, lest by any unhappy chance such as had so nearly taken place already, Tarilam should come to the knowledge of her possession of it; his letters and his gifts had shared the same fate. She was a free woman, bound to the past by nothing—save her heart-strings.

It was a terrible exception; yet how many young women, as she sometimes reflected, were even in a worse plight than herself. It was at worst to a dead man, and not to a living one—to a memory and not to some true heart still beating with passionate but fruitless love for her—that she was about to prove faithless. And the wooer she had accepted, though, alas! unloved, was worthy of her love—if she could but have given it to him. He had won her gratitude, her admiration, her affection; he would prove in all things, she felt sure, that are commonly ascribed to such a relation, the best of husbands to her.

Yet the decision she had finally arrived at, of returning with him to Breda, was only one degree less intolerable to her than its sole alternative to become his wife in England. In vain she called to mind his virtues, his nobility of mind,

his generosity of disposition, his tender consideration, his simplicity—which to abuse would be like deceiving a trustful child—and his absolute devotion. It was a noble picture, but on the living wall of memory there hung the likeness of Charles Layton, and she had not the power to remove it, far less to substitute the other's protrait in its place.

Three days had now elapsed since she had last seen Tarilam, and it was significant indeed of the state of her feelings towards him that this circumstance not only awakened in her no anxiety, but was a positive relief to her. Hitherto he had always spent some time with her at least once a day; his absence was therefore the more unaccountable, and what was almost as surprising, Aunt Sophia had not remarked upon it. What was also curious, and would under other circumstances have certainly not escaped Edith's notice, was that, although the captain's trial was now close at hand, her aunt talked very little about it, but made her niece's affairs the chief topic of her conversation.

Mr. Ernest Norbury had, it appeared, embezzled almost all her fortune, but in such a manner as was not beyond the reach of recovery; and active steps, she was told, were being taken to this end. To Edith—bound for Breda—this was a matter, indeed, of almost complete indifference, but it was necessary to feign some interest in it.

"Who is it," she inquired one morning, "that has taken this sanguine view of my affairs?"

"Mr. Baring; he is a very capable person, and I am told he is doing wonders for you."

"I should have thought he had had his hands full of a more important matter," was the quiet reply; "but I am much obliged to him for the interest he is so good as to take in me."

"He does take a great interest in you, no doubt, from what the captain has told him."

"It would be ungracious not to acknowledge it. The next time he comes here I shall be glad to see him."

"Well, he has only been here once," stammered Aunt Sophia; "the captain's business is always transacted at his chambers. I scarcely think——"

"My dear Sophy, you need not distress yourself about this paragon," put in Edith, with a faint smile. "I dare say we shall both survive it even if we never meet." Then, after a pause, "When does the ship sail for Breda?" she asked abruptly.

"Immediately. No; by the by, the day has been put off indefinitely, but soon; that is why Tarilam has not been here of late. He told me to tell you, if you should express surprise at it, that he has been so much engaged in seeing about her lading. The Company are behaving very generously, and he has only to ask for what he wants and thinks will be of service to his people."

"I must know the date for certain," said Edith, earnestly. Her face was deadly pale, her hand was pressing upon her heart, as though to suppress some inward pain. "I must know exactly when the ship sails."

Aunt Sophia herself was almost equally agitated, and, indeed, that her companion had made no answer to her reference to Tarilam might well have shocked her. "I will find it out for you," she faltered.

"Please do, dear, it is important, for I mean to go in that ship."

"You! Great heavens!" exclaimed Aunt Sophia, starting to her feet. "You must be mad to say so."

"No, I am not mad," returned the girl with a quiet distinctness that somehow seemed worse than desperation, "but only very unhappy. Do not make me more so, Sophy darling, by attempting to alter what is my fixed determination. I am quite resolved to marry Tarilam at once and return with him to Breda. Of course, such a step seems terrible to you; it does to me; but to remain

here as his wife would be impossible for me. Yes, that is the truth, which I confess to you, and to you alone, because nothing less will convince you of the necessity of what I am about to do."

"He must never, never know it," gasped Aunt Sophia, replying, as it seemed, to some inward thought rather than to the other's words.

"Know it! Heaven forbid! If you tell him what I say—I mean about my being unhappy and not loving him as he deserves to be loved—I will never forgive you to my dying day. Not to speak of it, never to let him feel how short I fall of what I should be to him, that is the least I owe him."

Her confession, long considered, long delayed, had been made—as such things often are—on the impulse of the moment. Perhaps the news that the ship was sailing soon had extorted it from her, though she knew that it would be delayed to suit her purpose. She had rightly judged that since she had given her reason Aunt Sophia would cease to urge objections. Her fear had been rather that she might have insisted on accompanying her into the exile which she had formerly proposed to share with her. That she had not done this—since it was a sacrifice she would never have accepted—was so far a matter for congratulation to Edith; but otherwise, the effect of her communication upon her companion was even more deplorable than she had apprehended.

"He must never, never know it," repeated Aunt Sophia, rocking herself to and fro and sobbing convulsively. "He must never, never know it." For the time it almost seemed that her passionate grief had deprived this faithful and tender-hearted woman of her senses.

"Don't let us talk of it, don't let us think of it, Sophy, dear," said Edith, soothingly. "Till the time comes, help me to escape from my own miserable and selfish thoughts; I entreat you, as you are kind and true, to do this as the

truest kindness to me. The trial is coming off to-morrow. How terrible it must be for poor Miss Head; but as for the captain, I cannot believe that so good a man can come to harm. How long is it likely to last?"

"The trial!" replied Aunt Sophia, wiping her eyes, and staring as though an entirely new subject had been proposed for her consideration. "Mr. Baring puts it at three days at farthest. He is very hopeful about it. Mellor and Rudge are the only witnesses on the other side, and it is said that they are most unwilling ones; their antecedents have been discovered to be very bad. All hangs upon the evidence of Bates."

"The wretch that tried to murder Charles Layton at the Cape!"

"Then you knew of that all along," exclaimed Aunt Sophia; "why did you not tell me?"

"Because I wished to spare your brother's memory. Yes, I knew it; yes. And if I had not known it, I should know it now. I have thought too much of my dear Charley of late to be ignorant of aught concerning him while in life. It is only when I try to think of him as dead and gone that instinct fails me."

"My poor darling!"

Pity could no further go than was expressed in those three words of Aunt Sophia; but there was terror in her tone as well as pity. While she bewailed her niece's future, it may be that she also doubted her strength to go through with it. Edith's manner, however, was from that moment very calm and quiet; and the forbidden subject was, for the present, no more alluded to.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE REVELATION.

It was the first day of the trial, and all Edith Norbury's thoughts were monopolized by that engrossing subject. All her male friends were of course in court, and she was naturally less surprised at Tarilam's absence—though she had not seen him now for almost a week—than she had been on any of the preceding days. If she had not made up her mind to be his wife so soon, she would no doubt have felt distress and even compunction at his continued omission to visit her. She would have examined herself more particularly as to whether something in her own conduct had not caused his absence, and would not have been so easily satisfied with Aunt Sophia's explanation of it ; but as matters were, and seeing he was to be blessed so much sooner than he had hoped with the possession of her, she could not grudge herself the sorrow of her solitude. There were now only a few days left to her for thought to wander free over what would henceforth be forbidden ground ; but on this occasion, as has been said, her mind was occupied with less selfish matters.

The whole morning Aunt Sophia and herself had spent in the company of their hostess, endeavouring to comfort her and keep up her spirits. From hour to hour messengers were despatched from the court-house to the poor lady with tidings of the trial, and, on the whole, considering that the prosecution alone had for the present the ear of the jury, the news was good. The worst that could be made out against the captain was that he had exceeded his powers and committed a technical though indeed a very serious offence ; it was not even contended by the other side that he had been actuated by any motives of a personal kind and apart from the consideration of the public good. It was rumoured, however, that Mr. Bates was prepared to

swear that his late chief had had a grudge against Murdoch, and, at all events, whatever danger was to be feared lurked in this man's testimony, and in that only. The report of it was therefore awaited by the three ladies with especial anxiety.

After the conclusion of the case for the Crown, however, no news was brought to them for hours, their communications had either by some accident been cut off—which, considering the press about the court-house, and the difficulty of ingress and egress, was not an unlikely thing to have happened—or the news was such as it was thought better not to send.

Aunt Sophia took the more cheerful view, and redoubled her efforts to sustain the courage of her hostess; but Edith, already broken in spirit, and all the chambers of her soul rendered unfit for the entertainment of hope, found herself as a consoler useless, and withdrew to her own sitting-room.

From that last and worst state of human misery, in which the cloud that overhangs ourselves seems to darken the sky for our fellow-creatures, the selfish and the egotistic are free; the area of their despondency is limited; they do not feel the pressure of that atmosphere of universal woe which weighs so pitilessly upon more tender natures in their hour of sorrow. To Edith it seemed only too likely that the fate which had dealt with her so cruelly might treat with the same harshness the poor captain, and the reflection doubled her own distress of mind.

It was not her habit to vex herself with "the riddle of the painful earth," a conundrum that rarely attracts the young; but on this occasion her thoughts had, with the boldness of despair, strayed beyond their usual limits into that dim and pathless forest of apprehension and surmise which, whether we are aware of it or not, surrounds us all. Once in it, the minutes pass like seconds, and the hours like minutes, though not, alas! on golden wings. Our

very existence is absorbed by that future which we thus vaguely contemplate, as the wanderer is lost in the quicksand. It is even doubtful in which of the two worlds, this or that which is to come, we live. What time had elapsed since she had been alone she knew not ; but the afternoon had faded into evening when she was aroused by a knock at her door. "Come in. What news?" she inquired in a breath.

"Good news ; at least, I hope so," was the captain's quiet reply, for it was the captain's self who stood before her.

She sprang to her feet with a wild cry of joy, and held out both her hands. "My *dear, dear* Captain Head, how happy I am to see you ! All has gone well, then, after all?"

"All has gone well, I hope, dear Miss Edith, after all," he repeated slowly.

"You hope?" she answered anxiously. "Then there is something still behind? Pray, pray tell me all."

"There is something, as you say, still behind," he answered, still in the same cautious and tentative tone, as of one who is afraid of saying too much. "I will tell you all some day, but it is a long story. Just now we have only time for the results, as it were."

She glanced at him in mute astonishment. Why was his speech so bald and bare? Why, too, did he use the plural word 'results'? There could be only one result he had to tell her. There was something in his manner, too, notwithstanding the glad tidings he had brought, and which, indeed, were corroborated by his presence, that filled her with vague alarm. The captain's stalwart arm seemed to tremble as he led her back to her seat, and placed himself beside her ; his loud straightforward tones had lost their vigour as he commenced to speak.

"This was how it was, Miss Edith. The lawyer that was on the other side had not much to say against me on his

own account, though he was a long time about it ; all he did say seemed to glance off the ears of the jury like water from a ship's bows, but he promised them better things in the way of my being shown to be a tyrant and a man-slayer when Mr. Richard Bates should come to be examined. That gentleman, he said, had no motive for having laid a criminal information against me, but that of redressing, so far as law could do so, the wrongs of a ship-mate, and doing justice to the memory of a dead—he had almost said a murdered—man. It was probable that it would be urged against this worthy person that I had deprived him of his rank, and that out of revenge he had trumped up this accusation against me, but that was, at most, a very small matter even if it could be proved, and would in no way affect the truth of the charge. There was not a tittle of evidence to show that Mr. Bates had been concerned in the alleged mutiny, which would, as he understood, form the poor excuse for my high-handed conduct. He was a just and honourable man, as the jury would presently see for themselves, and incapable of that or any other heinous crime. It might be true that the inquiries into the character of the lives of other witnesses for the prosecution had resulted unfavourably ; there were very few of us, perhaps, who had not some secret in our past which we would wish effaced, but this, again, could not affect—or only moderately affect—their testimony upon the matter in hand, while that of Mr. Bates was pure as the driven snow from any stain."

A shiver of disgust passed through Edith's frame. "Well, well, my dear young lady, we will cut it as short as possible," said the captain, patting her hand ; "this learned gentleman, since he was paid for it, was only right to do his best, and his best, no doubt, he did. Though he painted Mr. Bates in such glowing colours, he had to produce the original, you see, after all ; and in the framework of the witness-box, I do assure you, he did not make

a pretty picture. Though I was in the dock myself, I did not envy him, with his hang-dog face, even from the first, and presently a time came when I could almost have found it in my heart to pity him."

"I could not have found it in mine," said Edith, sternly, "for he was at heart a murderer."

The captain stroked his chin, and stared at her with a puzzled look. "That was just what I was coming to myself," he faltered; "is it possible that you know all about it?"

"I know that he tried to murder Charles Layton at the Cape."

"Just so, just so," said the captain softly; and then he sighed, like one who having, as he had hoped, come to the end of a difficult job, finds once more all his work before him.

"Well, Miss Edith, they say it would be a good thing if we could see ourselves as others see us, and if so, I ought to be thankful for the account of myself which I heard from Mr. Richard Bates when under the examination of his counsel. It was, I assure you, quite a revelation, and without his unimpeachable evidence, I could never have believed myself to be the irredeemable scoundrel which he showed me to be. By the time he had got to my shooting of that unhappy wretch, Matthew Murdoch, I began to wonder why I was not on trial for my life, and even why justice had so long permitted me to live."

"I suppose that was the reason—I mean the utterance of this man's slanders," put in Edith, "that no report was brought us of his evidence."

"Well—partly—yes," hesitated the captain; "something also occurred later on, my dear young lady, which it was thought you would not easily understand at second hand, and so they thought it better to wait till I could come home and tell it you myself."

"Indeed! what was that?" said Edith with a preoccupied air. Her tone had become almost indifferent; now

that her companion was evidently out of peril, she found it difficult to keep her thoughts from straying from the subject. The captain, on the other hand, was growing more nervous and embarrassed with every word. Though his bluff face was paler than usual, he passed his handkerchief across it again and again, as though he were in the tropics; a gentle execration would now and again hover on his lips, whether in condemnation of his own stupidity, or of those who had set him a task beyond his powers, it was impossible to say.

"You should have seen the change in that fellow Bates," he continued, with an attempt at hilarity in his tone which was piteous to the last degree, "when Collins got hold of him and shook him, as a terrier shakes a rat. If you have ever seen a man hanged—which, however, I dare say you have not—and noticed how he becomes in the instant a mere heap of clothes—well, that was Bates's case under cross-examination. I soon found out that there was, at all events, one man in the world a deal worse than I had been shown to be, and riper for the gallows. It was amazing how much more Collins, Q.C., seemed to know of what had been going on in Faybur, and under my very nose as it were—and he a thousand miles away—than I ever knew myself. Bates, he showed, was hand-in-hand with the Malay, the inventor of that secret still, from the fumes of which arose half our misfortunes, and the instigator, if not the actual perpetrator, of the murder of poor Marston, which he tried to lay at the door of the good prince."

Edith's flagging attention was roused in an instant. "Oh, traitor and villain!" she cried; "how well I remember it!"

"You do, do you?" said the captain, earnestly. "You may perhaps recollect, then, one expression that Bates used which puzzled us all, when his accusation failed, about 'cutting a rope'?"

Edith shook her head. "It is no matter," said the captain, but in a disappointed tone, and with the same air of having neared his object, and then, having found himself all abroad again, as he had done before. "Well, when Mr. Collins had done with Mr. Bates, the scoundrel revived at once, like one who has received his dozen at the grating, and does not know that there's another boat-swain's mate to come. When he saw Mr. Baring rise from his seat, he didn't seem to fear him as he had done the other (concluding him, I suppose, to be a much younger and probably less skilful lawyer), and he even answered the first question or two he put to him in such an impudent and offhand way as called forth a rebuke from the judge. But when he was asked, 'Did you know one Mr. Charles Layton on board the *Ganges*?' he turned a very queer colour, I promise you. What seemed very strange, however, to me at the time, considering the effect he had evidently produced by the introduction of that gentleman's name, Mr. Baring did not pursue the subject. His design, as I now believe, was to set Bates's thoughts running in a particular channel, in order to make certain revelations he had in store for him more convincing and complete, when the time came. If Mr. Collins had shown himself conversant with matters at Faybur, Mr. Baring manifested even a more minute acquaintance with what took place on our voyage out from first to last. It would have been impossible to believe, Miss Edie, unless one had not known the contrary, that he had not himself been a passenger on board the *Ganges*. One would have thought that he had known your uncle and cousin and even yourself quite familiarly, and had been qualified to speak of all of us from personal knowledge. Among others, he spoke again of Mr. Charles Layton."

Edith uttered not a word, but in the gathering twilight her companion noticed that she straightened herself in her chair like one who collects all her powers of endurance to

bear the hearing of some painful and distressing thing. "I will spare you all I can, Miss Edie," murmured the captain gently, "but it is necessary you should know what took place. As the examination proceeded the witness grew more and more perturbed in manner whenever his gaze met that of Mr. Baring, who presently put this question to him: 'You remember the day on which the storm carried away the deck-house with Mr. and Miss Norbury in it?'

"'Yes,' said Bates, very slowly, and with his eyes fixed on the roof of the court-house, 'I remember it well.'

"'Look at *me*, if you please,' said Mr. Baring sternly. 'Do you remember any other circumstance that happened on that day?'

"'Yes, Mr. Layton was drowned.'

"'How was he drowned?'

"There was no reply. Bates moved his lips a little and that was all. His face was like the face of a dead man. The whole court was so hushed in waiting for his answer that you might have heard a pin drop.

"'Come, sir, you cannot have forgotten a circumstance of which you were a witness, though not, perhaps as you have hitherto imagined, the only witness. Be so good as to tell us what happened at the very time—or within a few seconds after it—that the deck-house of the *Ganges* was carried away.'

"'The *Flying Dutchman* was seen by the two men at the wheel.'

"'I am not asking you what was seen by the men at the wheel. Let us hear, if you please, how Mr. Layton was drowned.'

"Then Bates licked his dry lips, and answered straightforwardly enough, but in a dull, mechanical way, 'When the deck-house was carried away with Mr. Norbury and his niece in it, Mr. Layton caught up a life-buoy and threw himself into the sea, with the object of saving the young lady.'

"'Well?'

"It was only a monosyllable, Miss Edie, but if it had been an indictment as long as my arm, it could not have been more effectual. Bates seemed by his looks to have changed places with me, and to be no longer the witness but the criminal.

" 'I know nothing more,' he faltered.

" 'What? Did you never see Mr. Layton's face again after he leapt from the deck?'

" 'Never.'

"The man was speaking so low that notwithstanding the silence, the judge could not hear it, and it had to be repeated.

" 'Think again,' said Mr. Baring. 'Was not the drowning man carried back to the ship's side while you were leaning over the bulwarks, and was there not a rope hanging from it at which he clutched?'

"The wretched creature was trembling, Miss Edie, in all his limbs, and whether he shook his head in dissent or not no man could say; but he did shake it.

" 'Look at me, Richard Bates,' cried Mr. Baring, in a terrible voice. 'Now will you dare to swear that you did not cut that rope?'

"He had taken off his wig, Miss Edie, and shown him the man he believed he had murdered!"

Edith threw up her arms with a wild cry of joy. "Not dead! not dead!" she exclaimed; then her head sank upon her breast, and she murmured in despairing tones, "Too late, too late!"

"Hush, hush, Miss Edie, you must not say that," said the captain soothingly, "it is always better late than never. If some one else had broken it to you instead of an old blunderhead like me, you would not be taking on so. It was cruel to me and cruel to you that they should have made me do it. But I do assure you things are not so bad as you think."

She held out her hand with a bitter smile, and the captain pressed it to his lips.

"There, there, now I know you have forgiven me, Miss Edie. I have plenty more to tell, but I don't know how to tell it, and that's the fact. As for what happened afterwards at the trial—though I know you are glad to see me a free man—you can afford to wait for all that. There is nothing so interesting to us, after all, as our own affairs, eh, Miss Edie?" this with a miserable attempt at slyness. "Your aunt is waiting below stairs to discuss them with you, unless you would like to see any one else first," he added, hesitatingly.

"Tarilam, Tarilam; I will see nobody but Tarilam," was Edith's impassioned reply.

"Oh dear, oh dear; what is to be done *now*?" ejaculated the captain, glancing helplessly about him. Then with a sudden look of relief, he stamped loudly upon the floor.

It was evidently a preconcerted signal, for Aunt Sophia at once presented herself at the door. "Have you told her all?" were her first words.

"I don't know what I've told her," replied the captain despairingly; "I only know I have made a mess of it, as I knew I should. She has heard that Mr. Baring is Charles Layton, and when I asked her if she would like to see him, she answers, 'Tarilam, Tarilam; I will see nobody but Tarilam.'"

"My pretty, *pretty* dear," exclaimed Aunt Sophia, throwing herself on her knees beside her niece, and embracing her tenderly, "Prince Tarilam has sailed to-day for Breda."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BREAKING IT.

THERE is a great art in 'breaking things' of an emotional character to the persons principally concerned. The American (Jonathan) who volunteered to convey the tidings of his friend (David's) death to his wife, thought, no doubt, he had hit upon a subtle and delicate way of doing it when he knocked at her door and inquired whether 'Widow David' lived there. But, as a rule, people shrink from this sort of task and prefer to get it done by proxy. It was not, however, because Aunt Sophia wished to spare herself that she had deputed the captain to reveal to Edith the fact of Charles Layton's being still in the flesh. She hoped that from his lips it would come, not indeed with a less shock of surprise, but with a less disturbing influence than from herself, whose very presence, cognizant as Edith knew her to be with her inmost feelings, must needs "make weakness weak," and unfit her for the reception of such amazing news. She had been in possession of it herself for many days, and judging from the weight of it even upon her own mind, she had almost feared lest that of Edith should break down under the burden so suddenly laid upon it.

It was not till after much discussion and consultation, and with the greatest pressure upon the gallant sailor himself, who shrank from it with a cowardice that did him infinite credit, that it had been decided, in case of his acquittal, to intrust this revelation to the captain's hands. It was hoped that the good news of his own discharge from danger would give his hearer strength to bear the tidings of what concerned herself; and, moreover, that it would be thus conveyed to her in the most natural and straightforward manner.

Unhappily, however, a man may have a story at first hand, and even of his own experience, and yet be a bad

hand at telling it. If the captain had not—as he had remorsefully confessed—absolutely “made a mess of it,” he had certainly not succeeded as a *raconteur*. Indeed, he had made the appalling mistake of beginning at the wrong end of his story, and now poor Aunt Sophia had to tell it all over again—under what must be allowed to be a great disadvantage—to an audience on the brink of hysterics. Even when the poor girl had recovered herself a little, it was doubtful whether she quite understood her position, since she kept murmuring, “Tarilam, Tarilam,” in a voice so despairing and pathetic as would have touched her companion in any case, but which, as matters were, gave her the keenest pain. At last, however, the symptoms of the malady, as it were, themselves suggested the remedy, and Aunt Sophia began to speak to her, not of the lover she had found, but of him she had lost, and who, heretofore, had been so injudiciously ignored.

“Do you remember, Edie, darling,” she said, taking the girl’s hand in both her own, and speaking with infinite tenderness, “the morning on which he found you in this very room, looking at Charles Layton’s picture?”

The reply was so feeble and choked with tears that only the ear of love could have caught it.

“You are right, my darling; he did not know *whose* it was at the time,” continued Aunt Sophia; “but no sooner had he left you than he met the very man face to face, in this very house, and recognized him for whom he was, only too well—that is why Tarilam has never seen you since, dear Edie.”

There was a long silence, which Aunt Sophia forbore to break, in hopes that from that last sentence the girl would be able to guess for herself the situation, and thereby render the details that must follow less distressing.

“I do not understand,” said Edie, passing her hand helplessly across her forehead. “How came Mr. Layton in this house?”

"Well, it was this way. When he leapt into the sea, it was as he thought to save you, and not your unhappy cousin; he believed you to have been drowned before his very eyes. How, after that wicked wretch had cut the rope by which he could have regained the *Ganges*, he was picked up by the ship which our sailors took for the *Flying Dutchman*, I will tell you another day; but after he returned to England he was as fully convinced of your own death as you were of his. Though he had saved his life, it seemed—as it seemed to you—that he had nothing left to live for."

Edith uttered a piteous moan, which went to the other's heart, for she understood its meaning.

"Do not reproach yourself, my darling," she continued, soothingly, "for, as well we all know, you did not forget him any more than he forgot you. You are both, as we all are, compelled by circumstances to do what seems the best—where all is bad—for ourselves. Law became his mistress, and he applied himself devotedly to his profession, though, as it happened, there was no longer need for him to work. You remember that he used to speak to you of certain expectations which might possibly bear fruit. They did so, and soon after his return to England he became a rich man, upon condition of his taking the name of Baring. The fact of his existence thus became, by that simple means, as unknown to you as that of yours to him. Though he knew, of course, of the rest of us having arrived from Faybur, he made no attempt to communicate with us. It was not flattering to poor me, Edie, was it? but the consciousness that you were lost to him made every association with you distressing to him.

"Directly he heard, however, of the danger in which the captain stood by the action of Mr. Bates, he volunteered his services. Though he knew that that scoundrel had returned home, he had hitherto not thought it worth his while to punish him; his attempt to murder him by

cutting the rope would have been a difficult thing to prove under ordinary circumstances ; but the fact, as he instantly perceived, might be made of infinite service to the captain, as indeed it proved, for on the confession of so foul a crime, wrung from the chief witness against him, the case broke down at once."

Here Aunt Sophia paused ; it seemed to her as though she spoke in vain ; for Edith evinced no sign of interest, scarcely of attention. Her eyes were fixed straight before her, with an expression of extreme bewilderment and pain, and the hand her companion clasped and fondled in her own was cold as ice and dead to the touch of sympathy.

"You said he was in the house—this very house—that day," she murmured presently.

"Yes, he called, as I have said, to offer his services in the coming trial, of which he had just heard. His card, of course, told the captain nothing, and 'Heaven forbid you should be the man I take you for,' were the words with which he was greeted.

"'You are sorry, it seems, to see me in the land of the living,' answered Mr. Layton, bitterly. 'Well, I am sorry to be there myself.'

"Then he went on to say that he should never have sought to renew his acquaintance with the captain, on account of the melancholy associations with his lost darling it must needs awaken, but for the peril in which the other stood, and which it was in his power, as he thought, to free him from.

"Not one word of this, Edie, as he assures me, did the poor captain at the moment understand ; he had been amazed beyond measure at finding Mr. Layton still alive ; the thought of the relations that had once existed between you and him, and which had been so unfortunately severed by your engagement with Prince Tarilam, shocked him exceedingly ; but now it seemed even a more terrible complication had arisen. It was plain that Mr. Layton

in his turn did not know of your existence, and it instantly struck the captain that it would be better he should never learn it, since to hear you were alive and out of his reach would be to suffer a second bereavement. If you had told the captain, as the other day you told me, that you intended to sail with Tarilam as your husband, he would certainly not have opened his lips to Mr. Layton; that he did not know this, and therefore felt that concealment was useless, is something, at least, to be thankful for, my darling."

Edith shook her head, and a piteous shiver ran through her slender frame.

"I feel as though I could be thankful for nothing but death," she answered with despairing calm. "I am the cause of trouble and wretchedness to all who belong to me, and most of all to those whom I love best."

"At all events, nobody grudges the trouble you have cost them," said Aunt Sophia soothingly. She felt how utterly inadequate were such words for the occasion; the rôle she had to play was far beyond her powers, yet, somehow, she must needs go through with it. "The captain, as I have said, my darling, felt that sooner or later Mr. Layton must become cognizant of what had happened, and that being so, the sooner he should learn it the better; and yet, as he confessed to me, he shrank from telling him, as he had never shrunk from peril on sea or shore. It seemed to him that no situation could be more distressing or beset with difficulties, till all of a sudden, while he was cudgelling his brains for a way out of it, the matter was made worse a thousand-fold—the door opened and Tarilam himself stood before them."

With a sharp cry of anguish, Edith put her hands up to her ears, as if to close her senses to what was coming.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE SACRIFICE.

"Do not shut your ears, Edie, darling," continued Aunt Sophia earnestly, "to the noblest story that ever woman had to tell of man."

"‘This is Prince Tarilam,’ said the captain, hardly knowing what he said. ‘And this,’ said the prince, interrupting him before he could complete his introduction, ‘is Mr. Charles Layton, whom Edie believes to be dead and drowned.’"

"He had recognized the likeness to the portrait he had just seen in your hand, and understood at once not only what had happened, but what must needs happen if he should take the course which the generosity of his noble nature had instantly suggested to him. His voice was calm and even gentle, the captain tells me, and in his generous face could be already read the self-sacrifice he had in contemplation."

"Let me go to him! let me tell him what I owe him!" cried Edith, starting to her feet. "Oh, Tarilam, Tarilam, why can I not be as noble as yourself?"

"Because, my darling, you are a woman," answered Aunt Sophia boldly, "and what was difficult for him is impossible for you. Not, however, by a hair's breadth would I belittle his greatness. You, who know how he loved you, can alone appreciate what it cost him to give you up. This he did, however, in a few simple words that deserve to be written in gold. Since you would never have promised to be his own, he said, had you not believed his rival to be dead, he acknowledged that you belonged by right to him who had first won your love. The simplicity of his reasons for right-doing touched his hearers almost as much as his self-sacrifice itself."

"‘One has heard of nature's noblemen,’ exclaimed Mr.

Layton, 'but here is a born prince indeed ;' and, independently of the huge obligation under which he is to him, it is impossible to exaggerate his admiration for Tarilam's character. Though, from obvious motives of delicacy, he has forborne to thrust his companionship upon him, he holds him as his dearest friend."

"Tarilam, Tarilam, tell me of Tarilam," murmured Edith impatiently; to speak or think of others just then, and especially of his rival, seemed to the poor girl, bowed down beneath that weight of debt, ungrateful and disloyal to her generous creditor.

"Tarilam, my darling, as was only to be expected of him," answered Aunt Sophia, "had no thought except for you, and how to cause you, where so much must needs be painful, the least possible distress of mind. It was arranged that under pretence of being occupied with the arrangements for the departure of his people, he should cease to visit you as usual. He had resolved to sail with them directly the trial was over, and he had seen that dear friend safe for whom, in all his own trouble, he had shown the tenderest solicitude. One stipulation only he made—that he should bid you one last good-bye before he went, and with his own lips wish you that happiness which——"

Here Aunt Sophia for the first time broke down; nothing, indeed, but the extreme importance of not giving way to emotion, for Edith's sake, had hitherto restrained her from doing so; for while she had been speaking of Tarilam, the picture of his calm, despairing face, so ill-assorting with his generous and self-denying words, had never been absent from her mind. She was moved, in truth, no less than Edith herself; who, though she now knew what Tarilam had done—and, better than any, its greatness and nobility—had not been a witness for days and days, as Aunt Sophia had been, to the doing of it. Tears Tarilam had not shed—for he had done nothing misbecoming—and tears did not become his father's son and a prince of

Breda; but the distress of that brave, though well-nigh broken heart, had been terrible to witness, and the thought of it all, for the moment, fairly overcame her.

Presently she felt herself roughly shaken by the arm, while at the same time a voice she scarcely recognized as that of her companion—it was so fierce and harsh—rang in her trembling ear. “And who forbade my Tarilam to come?” it inquired menacingly; “who dared to deny me to him? Oh, cruel and ungrateful wretch that he must think me! The one poor favour that he asked of one who owed him all to be refused! Who was it, woman?”

“Edie darling, forgive me, it was I.”

“You!”

Monosyllable though it was, the word seemed the very concentration of contempt and even hate, and the girl shrank from her as she uttered it.

“Listen, Edie, and when I have told you why I did it,” said Aunt Sophia piteously, “think of me what you will. When he first proposed to say his last good-bye to you in person, I offered no opposition to it; it would, I knew, be distressing to you, of course, to the last degree, but since he seemed to think it would be some comfort to him, I felt it only due to him that he should have his way. It was then arranged, as he had understood, that you were to marry him within a few weeks or months; but when you presently confided to me that you proposed to be his wife at once and sail with him to Breda, a terror seized me lest you should tell him so before he could explain how matters really stood. It would have been too much for mortal man to bear, Edie, if his disappointment had taken that shape; to have such a cup of happiness held to him so close, and then to have had to dash it from his lips with his own hands, was an ordeal too terrible to subject him to. Do you remember how, when you told me of your intention, I said, ‘He must never, never know it’? though fortunately you misunderstood my meaning. All I thought

of then, all I have thought of since, was to spare that noble heart one needless pang. I persuaded him that to see you again would distress you infinitely more than to learn what had happened from other lips, or from his own written words, and that argument, as I had foreseen, sufficed. He could not bring himself to write just now to his dear writing mistress.—There, there, I will say no more.”

Aunt Sophia had said enough, and more than enough, though how to have told her story in fewer or more judicious words would have puzzled a wiser brain than hers. Those simple words, “his dear writing mistress,” had “melted the waxen heart” of her companion, and she had fallen on the floor like one struck by death itself. The tension to which her mind had so long been subjected, followed by the shock of the captain’s tidings, had tried her strength to the uttermost, and now it had given way.

“I have killed my darling,” was Aunt Sophia’s first agonized thought, and when, after life returned, and the patient lay for weeks in fever and delirium, her remorse was hardly less poignant. Her cry was only exchanged for one almost as bitter, “I have driven my darling mad.” That Edith, however, remained for so long a period utterly ignorant of the events that had been so perilously crowded into her last day of conscious life was probably on the whole to her advantage, for before she came to herself her constitution had had time to gather strength.

The first question she put to Aunt Sophia in her natural voice, “Where is he, Sophy, dear?” was one that puzzled that good lady not a little to reply to; for she was by no means certain as to which of her two swains Edith was making inquiry. Upon consideration, indeed, she felt it must needs be Mr. Charles Layton, and I am afraid she rather grudged that fortunate gentleman his first place in her niece’s mind.

It was very unreasonable, of course, but the fact was

that Aunt Sophia had become, though unconsciously, a partisan on the losing side. The spoils were to the victor, and he could well afford to be without her sympathy, the absence of which, moreover, he never discovered, and though somebody else did so, she was far indeed from resenting it. If anything could have made Aunt Sophia dearer to her niece's heart than she was, it was the consciousness that she respected and admired Prince Tarilam more than any living man. They did not talk of him together very often, but when they did so it was with hushed voices and dewy eyes.

Charley always spoke of him to his wife as the noblest fellow he had ever met, but somehow his praise was not acceptable to her; it was well meant, indeed, but, like the worship that had been offered to her as the Queen of Flowers, it was, she felt, but the incense of ignorance. None but herself—and one other—knew what a noble heart beat in Prince Tarilam's breast, and, thanks to that other, still continued to beat. Of this, however, Edith knew nothing till years afterwards, when the child that had nestled in her bosom was dancing on her knee.

CHAPTER L.

AUNT SOPHIA'S SECRET.

EDITH had received that day a letter from Breda, the first of many a one that reached her whenever opportunity served, and the two women had been talking of the writer with infinite tenderness.

"To hear that dear Tarilam is well and happy," said Edith, looking at her boy, "makes my cup of happiness full to the brim. Hitherto, as I may now confess to you,

Sophy, darling, there has always been a drop of bitterness in it."

"You need not blame yourself on that account," answered Sophia, with a sudden touch of tartness. "If you had forgotten his misery, you would have deserved to share it."

"That is quite true, dear Sophy," was the humble reply. Then, after a little pause, "Was he so very, very miserable?" she rejoined softly. "I have never dared to ask you about what happened on that dreadful day, when you took leave of him, but now that he seems so happy and resigned——"

"Or says so for your sake," put in Aunt Sophia significantly.

"Indeed, dear Sophy, I hope that it is not so; why should you think it? Have you any reason unknown to me?"

"Reason! no, I have no reason," answered the other, dryly, "but only a woman's instinct, and pity for a generous nature hardly used."

"Oh, Sophy, and have *I* no pity?"

"I should be ashamed, indeed, to think so, Edie; but you have your husband and your child; and sometimes in your paradise of happiness it seems to me that you have forgotten him to whom you owe it."

"Indeed, indeed, I have not forgotten him; Heaven knows it, for night and day his name is in my prayers."

"Then I have done you wrong; forgive me."

The two women kissed and wept, while the child gazed at them and pulled his mother's sleeve, amazed.

"At one time I had wished to keep what I had to tell a secret to myself for ever, Edie, and then I thought I would wait and tell you when time had given you strength to bear it; and then, again, when I saw you, as I wrongfully supposed, forgetting him a little, I hid the matter, because

I felt you were unworthy to hear it, and if you had not asked me, Edie, you would never have known one word of it to my dying day.

"When Tarilam had given you up to his rival, it was fortunate, indeed, I thought, that he had so much to busy himself about in the preparation of his people for their voyage and in the lading of the ship. I saw him every day, and though he spoke of you at times in words that pierced my heart with their devotion and despair, he mainly dwelt upon the subject of the voyage, and of the pleasure which this and that and the many gifts he was taking back would give the king, his father. You remember his room, Edie, how crowded it was with those little mementoes of his own choosing, simple and often worthless in themselves, but speaking so eloquently of his filial love?"

There was no reply, but by the tears that coursed down Edith's cheeks it was easy to see that she remembered them well.

"At last the ship was ready for sailing at an hour's notice, and only awaited the prince's pleasure, while he, on his part, was delaying his departure for the result of the trial. It was arranged that directly this should be known I should communicate the news to him, and bid him a last farewell. The messenger arrived from the court-house only a little in advance of the captain himself, who always says that the heaviest burthen ever laid upon a man's shoulders was the telling of the tale he had to tell to you. While he was doing it, however, I was employed upon a task that was even more painful, for the captain's story had a bright side for your eyes, Edie, and my good-bye to Tarilam had none for his. He listened to all I had to say of you with greedy ears, but in silence, and the distress in his gentle face was piteous to witness. The only thing that seemed to give him comfort was the conviction I expressed that in due time, and after you had recovered

from the shock of his departure, you would be happy. He seemed to feel the same content as regarded you which a dying parent feels in the happiness of his children."

"Did he speak of Charley?" whispered Edith, in trembling tones.

"Yes; in the most kind and generous terms, acknowledging his superiority to himself and the likelihood of his making you a better husband. Not a touch of jealousy 'stained the white radiance' of that noble soul."

Edith was choked with sobs. Aunt Sophia took up the child and placed it on the mother's lap ere she resumed.

"He had declined to write to you ere he went away, as I have said; but I now besought him to take the first opportunity of doing so on arriving at Breda. I told him how dear his memory would always be to you, and what pleasure it would give you to hear from him. To this he answered nothing. 'You *will* write to her, will you not, dear Tarilam,' I adjured him solemnly, 'as soon as you get home?'

"Then, when he still made no reply, I read something in his face which, though it must have been there all along, I had not seen before. I should not have seen it, then, perhaps, but for the recollection that suddenly occurred to me of something he had said to me in Faybur. He had told me that it was the custom of his royal race, when they found life too great a burthen, to put an end to their own existence by the woorali poison, a few grains of which they always carried about with them. I had thought little of it at the time—for, strange as it was, there was so much else that was strange in those days—and still less afterwards, when Tarilam had, as it were, become one of ourselves, and seemed to be separated from all the ways of his kinsfolk. But now that he would not give me his promise to write—for, as you know, he could never be induced to tell a lie—it struck me, in a flash, what he meant to do. 'Tarilam,' I said, 'I have given you hope,

and good hope, that sooner or later our Edie may recover from the sorrow which your sudden and unlooked-for departure must needs cause her ; but, believe me, she is in no condition to bear any further shock. If you think of killing yourself, remember you will kill her also.'

"He did not answer, but turned his face away from me with a piteous groan. I had guessed his purpose, and saw that it was already frustrated. He had flattered himself that he had found a way of escape out of his misery, and now it was closed to him, as I knew, for *ever*. 'It would have been easy to die for her, dear Tarilam,' I said, 'but you must do more—you must live for her,' and it is for your sake, Edie, that he is living now."

For the rest, a more loving husband than Charles Layton no woman ever found, nor was it to be wondered at, since he had been always devoted to her. "Faithful and true, living or dead," had been the promise he had made to her from the first, and he kept it loyally. She was loving and devoted too, but with a difference ; the sense that she had not been so loyal as he oppressed her. Her offence (for such she always considered it) in this respect had unhappily been twofold, or rather had been a twofold catastrophe. She had forgotten the dead and misled the living. They had both forgiven her and both assured her, indeed, that there was nothing to forgive, but she could not forgive herself. The subject was never alluded to, but years elapsed before remorse faded to regret. She had troubles, as have the happiest of us—one that especially wrings a mother's heart, but even that did not surpass the pang of pity and self-reproach that shot through it whenever she thought of Tarilam. Society was distasteful to her, partly, perhaps, because she feared lest its babble—whether thoughtless or malicious—might concern itself with this tender topic, and partly because long residence in her island home had begotten a taste for solitude. Her

husband toiled and throve, and was raised, while still in middle life, to the bench. Her greatest happiness was in his success, and, above all, in the honour in which he was held by all men; but her own life was a retired one. What had happened to her at Faybur was not only an epoch in her life, but an experience that coloured all the current of it. Many a woman, before she meets the man of her choice, has a sweetheart whose memory keeps its tender and not unwholesome fragrance for years, but the recollection of Tarilam abode, in all honesty and honour, in Edith's heart for ever. She never forgot her Prince of the Blood.

EPILOGUE.

THE FAIRY GODMOTHER.

It was by the last post, on the previous evening, that Arthur Forester had received at his chambers in the Temple the MS. which Cicely had sent him, and when he rose from its perusal the summer sun was high in the heavens. The narrative was certainly not without an interest of its own, and the more so since it was the life history of one still living, and whom he had so lately seen; but it could hardly, I fear, have riveted his eyes to its pages for so many hours had it not had for him a personal interest of the most vital kind. It was, indeed, as he had been assured, no allegory, but a lesson that he who ran might read; its obvious moral was, under every chance and change, to be faithful to those we love; and it addressed itself, as Cicely had told him, at least as much to her as to him. She might have said even more so, for in her godmother's story, which, without doubt, was that of Edith Norbury, it was Edith who had failed in her fidelity, and not her lover. It was true that her own case was not

Cicely's, inasmuch as she had refused to be engaged to him; but, if he had had any doubt of it before, he was now well convinced that she loved him, and was willing to wait for him, if only he should prove himself worthy of her; her sending him the story could have had no other purpose than to assure him of it.

The words that she had written on its envelope were even still more convincing—"I sympathize with her regrets," which meant, of course, with Edith's regrets; for if the tale had been named after its heroine instead of its hero, might it not well have been called 'The Remorse of Edith Norbury'?

And who *was* this Edith Norbury, whom he had only seen but once, and never before—though it seemed she was Cicely's godmother—so much as heard of? There was a Layton, he dimly remembered to have heard, who had risen at an unusually early age to the bench, and had died when still young—for a judge. That must have been thirty years ago and more; but it was quite possible that the beautiful old lady he had seen in the wheeled chair, and whom he had likened to a princess, was his widow. And it seemed that she might have been a princess had she so chosen. No wonder that Cicely had said to him that evening, "Among all the thousands that are in these gardens, there is no one whose story has been such a romance as hers;" but how strange it was that he had never heard of it!

Upon consideration, however, was it, he asked himself, so strange? It was a story that its heroine had very good reasons for concealing; and its incidents were more than half a century old. However notorious it might once have been, there was time enough and to spare for it to have been forgotten. Scores of people with whose name the world is busy in their youth survive to find themselves obscure, and the more quickly if, as was doubtless this lady's case, they seek obscurity.

Interesting as Lady Layton had become to him since he had learnt her story, Mr. Arthur Forester had, however, matters of greater interest to think of, albeit they arose from its perusal. He sat down and wrote two letters, one to the secretary of a great personage who had offered him the appointment in India, and one to Cicely. The tone of this latter note was affectionate and devoted, but free from passion. "I have read the story of your dear godmother," it said, "with the utmost interest, and have laid its lesson to heart. I should have liked before I sail to thank her for it in person, but I can easily understand that that is impossible. My time is short—three weeks from this date. You will give me, dear Cicely, one interview, I know, before I go. I promise you it shall cost you nothing, for I will ask for nothing." It was a very humble letter as regarded Cicely, and a very modest one as regarded himself. "With such a prize in view as I have," he said, "it is a small thing to say that I shall do my best to win it. If I fail to do so, it will be my own fault, but not (as I would have selfishly made it) another's misfortune."

In reply to his letter, Cicely appointed a day for their interview. It was not at an early date, but the reason for that, as they were to meet but once before his departure for India, was easily explicable. To feel that he was still on English ground for any time after she had bidden him her last good-bye would naturally be distressing to her. In the interval Arthur Forester occupied himself in making arrangements for his departure.

At the appointed day he repaired to his uncle's house—who was a widower—where he was evidently expected. Instead of being shown up into the drawing-room, he was ushered to the boudoir, which he rightly judged to be of good omen. Impecunious cousins and detrimentals generally have not the *entrée* of that sacred apartment.

Presently Cicely entered, accompanied by an old lady, very gentle and gracious-looking, who leaned upon the girl's arm. Arthur recognized her at once, and before saluting his mistress, respectfully raised her companion's fingers to his lips. "You know who I am, it seems, young sir," she observed good-naturedly.

Now, instead of saying "Yes, you are Cicely's god-mother," Arthur had the intelligence to reply, "You are Lady Layton, madam," and she inclined her head with a smile of pleasure. Even the most unselfish of one's fellow-creatures like to be valued for their own sakes. Moreover, the young man's words were accompanied by a look of unmistakable tenderness and sympathy. It touched him to think that, woefully changed indeed by time and trials, but still a living being like himself, there stood before him Edith Norbury, who fifty years ago had been, perhaps, the counterpart of Cicely herself. Her story, with all its *dramatis personæ*, came involuntarily into his mind. Were they all dead and gone, he wondered, and she alone left to tell of them?

Her ladyship looked at him very fixedly. "Forgive," she said, "the egotism of a recluse. What is it, young sir, that you are thinking about me?"

Arthur blushed to his forehead. If he could have invented some less personal reply on the spur of the moment, it is probable he would have done so; but, as it was, he told her the simple truth.

"It is a good sign for you, darling," she said, turning to Cicely, "that this young man pities the old. Yes, sir," she added in low tremulous tones, "they are all dead, save one—the good Prince, and my dear husband, and kind Aunt Sophy, and honest Captain Head. They are all gone to heaven, where I hope soon to follow them. But do not let me shadow with my cares, my child, your parting hour."

Here the old lady whispered to Cicely something, at which she shook her pretty head. "Well, if I must, I must," returned her ladyship, though not at all like one who is acting compulsorily, but, on the contrary, with a bright smile that illumined her gray face as sunshine sparkles on the frost.

"You see it is not as if you and Sissy here were engaged to be married, Mr. Arthur," she began, "in which case, you would be settling your own affairs together, without the intervention of any old woman in Christendom; but as I understand the matter, you are both as free as air, though one of you is on his probation." Here Cicely was about to interrupt, but her godmother lifted an imperious finger for silence. "I am speaking to the young gentleman," she said, "and not to you at all, miss."

"What you say is very true, Lady Layton," returned Arthur humbly, "except that my own position is not quite so good as you are pleased to describe it."

"You mean that if your happiness could be secured by your own efforts there would be no fear of your success, but that it is very doubtful, even if you do your very best in India, whether you will earn sufficient, within a reasonable time, to enable you to come home and maintain a wife in England."

"I could go out to *him*," murmured Cicely pleadingly.

"You will do nothing of the kind, miss," returned her godmother sharply. "Do you suppose that my young friend here is such a selfish wretch as to permit it?"

"Certainly not," protested Arthur. "She might be shipwrecked."

"True; as *I* was. Then you would think her dead and marry some one else."

"Never," said Arthur, confidently.

The tears came into the old lady's eyes.

"That is what *I* used to say, my dear, you remember," she murmured sadly, "and yet I did not keep my word."

Arthur did remember it, but unfortunately too late; he was vexed with himself for having inadvertently distressed her; but it was plain she was not vexed with him.

From "young sir" she had dropped quite naturally into "my young friend," and now she had called him "my dear."

"I think I will leave you two young people together," she said; then with a loving glance at Cicely, "You may tell him what you please, my darling."

"I would much rather that you stayed with us, dear godmother, and told him yourself," replied Cicely demurely.

"That is not your view, Mr. Arthur?" said the old lady smiling, for indeed the young gentleman's countenance, which had risen to 'very fair' at that promise of a *tête-à-tête*, had fallen a little; "nor must you imagine that it is in reality Sissy's. She only wishes to give an old woman whom she loves, and who has few joys left her in this world, a great pleasure."

"Heaven forbid that I should hinder it, dear madam," said Arthur earnestly. He felt what he said, for the old lady interested him immensely.

"You have a kind heart, sir," said Lady Layton gently, "which makes the task that has been committed to me the more welcome. Though you have known Sissy long, I have known her longer, and though it may seem impossible to you, I do not love her less. I have for many years lived more in the past than in the present, and quite alone. It pleased God to take my darling boy from me, and since then she has been as my own child. Having no mother, it was natural that she should come to me for advice and assistance in her little troubles; but at last there came a great trouble—*you*, sir."

Here Lady Layton shook a jewelled finger at him, and

Arthur hung his head ; not so low, however, but that he could see Cicely smiling benignly on him over her god-mother's chair, which kept his spirits up amazingly.

"I was horrified to find that a young man without a penny had dared to lift his eyes to my godchild. What was still worse, this gentleman did not seem inclined to bestir himself to earn a penny."

Arthur made a movement of dissent.

"That is what I gathered, sir, from my informant, notwithstanding, you may be sure, that she made every excuse for you ; you were ready to break stones in the road to win her, in England, it seemed, only stone-breaking was not a remunerative calling ; but you hesitated to accept £200 a year in India with the same object."

"It was not the going to India, madam, but the fear of losing her while I was away," put in the young man plaintively.

"That is what you protested, of course ; but I was not inclined to believe you. 'This is in my opinion an idle young fellow, Sissy,' I said, 'and totally unworthy of you,' on which Sissy burst into tears.

"'It is better to cry now,' said I, 'than to cry when things are past mending.' So you see, sir, I was set dead against you, and did what I could to your disadvantage."

"At *first*," observed Cicely very softly, like an explanatory chorus which has lost its voice.

"Be quiet, miss," remarked the old lady reprovingly. "Well, sir, my advice to Sissy was not only that she should not engage herself to you—which, indeed, she was far too wise to do—but, unless you accepted that appointment in India of your own free-will, that she should give you up. She would not express her own opinion on the matter that night at the Inventions one way or the other, you remember, but left it to your own decision, and still you hesitated, sir. Then suddenly (catching sight of

me in my wheeled chair) she thought of my unhappy story, which, if read aright, though she could not plight her faith to you in so many words, it struck her might indirectly assure you of it."

"I am thankful to say it did so," murmured the young fellow.

"My experience has been a bitter one, Heaven knows, but since it has taught you wisdom, it has not been without good fruit. God bless you both!"

Arthur once more bowed his head, this time without venturing to look at Cicely; he felt somehow that some supreme moment as regarded his future was at hand; but when he looked up again, Lady Layton had disappeared.

"You will not see her again, Arthur," said Cicely, gravely, in answer to his look of amazement. "It was only for my sake that my dear godmamma consented to see you at all; for she sees no one. If I had not been certain that she would have liked you, I would not have risked it."

"Risked it?"

"That was not perhaps the right word to use," said Cicely, blushing, "for in any case I had obtained her consent to our betrothal."

Here there was what is called in music 'an interval,' and it was very harmoniously spent.

"What are those papers she has left on the table, Sissy?"

"Papers? I did not know that there was more than one. This is your appointment from Judge Manners, a very old friend of Lady Layton's husband."

"Judge Manners! But it was not in his gift."

"Not the Indian one. But this is a revising barrister-ship, and she knows some 'solors,' as you call them, and promises to get you work from them besides."

"What a fairy godmother my darling has!"

"You may well say that," exclaimed Cicely, her pretty face lit up with glad surprise. "See what she has given to *me*, Arthur."

It was a deed making over to her the sum of £500 a year till the donor's death, "after which my dear godchild will be otherwise," it said, "suitably provided for."

"And did you know nothing of this?"

"Not of this, only of the other."

"I wonder why she never told you until now?"

"I think I know, my darling. She had not made up her mind until she had seen you whether you were a fit and proper person to be intrusted with such a treasure as myself. If she had had her doubts, she would have withheld her munificence until you had passed through some period of probation; but as it is——"

"We are to be married to-morrow," interrupted Arthur rapturously.

"How can you be so foolish?"

"But that is what she means, Sissy; I don't say that she has fixed that date for the ceremony, but she wishes it to happen as soon as possible. To delay it would be an act of mutiny and ingratitude of which I cannot believe you capable, and which would be only worthy of Mr. Bates."

Moved by these and other arguments, Cicely consented to name the day, and it was not a remote one.

The only drawback to it in the young couple's eyes when it arrived was that it lacked the presence of Lady Layton, who, as they both honestly thought, was very inadequately 'represented' by a magnificent diamond necklace.

"Who was that stout old gentleman, my darling?" inquired the bridegroom, as they drove away for their honeymoon, "who handed you your godmother's present. I heard him say something about being her dearest friend."

“That is the sole survivor of whom she spoke the other day. When the East India Company were dissolved, some of its naval officers took rank in the Royal Navy; and he is one them, Admiral Conolly, C.B.”

“What, Master Lewis Conolly?”

“Yes, the same, though not the same. He is the only person alive in England, save poor dear godmamma, who remembers Prince Tarilam.”

THE END.

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